



THE INDEPENDENT

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Robinson censured by MPs for failing to register offshore trust



Mr Robinson with his wife, Marie Giorgio. Sir Gordon Downey said there was no reason for her not to receive payments from the fund

Photograph: John Voss

Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster-General, was last night censured by MPs for failing to disclose his interest in a £12.75m Guernsey-based trust. On the eve of a Commons debate on tax avoidance and offshore trusts, Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, says the Tories are demanding the Paymaster-General's resignation.

The Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges found Mr Robinson not guilty of breaching the rules of the Commons - because there is no clear-cut rule on registration of an interest in a trust.

But it pointed out that when an MP has doubts, as Mr Robinson had, because he sought the advice of a QC and accountants, he would do better to seek the expert advice of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Sir Gordon Downey. Sir Gordon told the committee the interest would have been better registered, and added: "This would have been my recommendation had my advice been sought."

Peter Lilley, shadow chancellor, who lodged the complaint, said: "This is a further embarrassment for Mr Robinson, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister. His position is untenable and he should go, or be moved." David Heathcoat-Amory, the Conservative front-bench treasury spokesman, said Mr Robinson had been charged

with hypocrisy, conflict of interest, and for being economical with the truth. "The fact that he is guilty of the second and third charges requires him to resign."

Last night, with the Prime Minister away in The Hague, there was no guidance from No 10 as to what should be done with Mr Robinson, counted as one of Tony Blair's friends. That Mr Lilley leaves open the option of Mr Robinson being shifted to another department could give the Prime Minister a face-saving get-out.

The report showed indications of politically motivated damage-limitation. There was no notice the report was coming; it was delivered at 6pm, making it difficult for newspapers to digest a complex document in time for first editions.

It was made more difficult

in that its initial conclusion stated: "There is no case for saying that Mr Robinson breached the rules of the House." There followed by an ambiguous paragraph saying: "Although not a requirement, there are occasions when interests of this nature would be better registered, and if a doubt should arise Members ought to seek the advice of the Commissioner."

"We and our predecessors have made this point on several previous occasions. If a Member feels it necessary to seek professional advice on a matter of registration, it is clear that some doubt must exist."

Only from close reading of the small print does it emerge that Mr Robinson twice sought advice about possible registration of the Orion family trust, established in January 1996.

His accountants and

Michael B-Joff, a leading counsel, said no specific disclosure of the trust was required in the Commons Register of Members' Interests. Sir Gordon said in his report to the committee: "It was ... a mistake for Mr Robinson to rely on advice of registration matters from his professional advisers."

As for the rules, Sir Gordon said: "The guide does not pretend to cover all contingencies and the circumstances surrounding the (Guernsey-based) Orion Trust have not arisen before."

Bob Sheldon, the former Labour minister who chairs the committee, said: "It is very difficult to lay down rules for trusts."

But the commissioner advised the committee that while Mr Robinson had no right to receive a pecuniary or other material benefit from the trust,

"Mr Robinson's hope of future distributions might reasonably be regarded as an expectation and, measured against the underlying intentions of the rules, this could be regarded as a pecuniary interest or other material benefit."

He added that while a suspension of payments applied to Mr Robinson, as a minister, it did not apply to his wife.

"In these circumstances," he said, "it can be argued that even without knowledge of the underlying shareholdings, the existence of the trust itself might reasonably be thought by others to be a source of potential influence. This is not just because Mr Robinson is a treasury minister: the same could be said of any Member who may wish to participate in proceedings in Parliament affecting the position of overseas trusts."

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2/BRIEFING



COLUMN ONE

MPs try to hedge against an unsociable fast mover

It is growing insidiously, causing darkness, depression, and despair. Its victims regard it as public enemy number one, and, so far, they have been defenceless against its march through the suburbs of England. Leylandii, the fastest-growing hedge in the West, has caused neighbours to engage in war, and now a group of Labour MPs are seeking a solution.

Backbench MP Lynne Jones is taking up cudgels against the monster hybrid from America on behalf of home-owners who feel their lives have been ruined by it. She is leading a campaign for the Home Office to allow an amendment to the Crime and Disorder Bill to outlaw hedges that have become a nuisance to those who have to live in their shadow. It follows the saga of one of her constituents, Michael Jones, of Tillyard Croft, in Selly Oak, who spent £100,000 in legal fees fighting the Leylandii at the bottom of his garden. His was the most expensive case of its kind in British legal history, and he won the right to have the hedge cut down to size after it had soared to around 30ft in height. His neighbour had to pay the costs, but Mr Jones risked losing his house if he had lost.

More than two hundred fellow sufferers have contacted him seeking a remedy, and Mr Jones has formed the HedgeLine to offer help. "Leylandii are terrible in different ways...



Eagle: sympathetic to those put in shade by the hedge menace

Planning laws against hedges are unclear. Mr Jones fought and won, but his neighbour has planted another hedge inside the cut-down Leylandii which is growing steadily. In Britain, where the home is the castle, there is no universal way of controlling growth of a neighbour's hedge.

Ms Jones and a group of Labour MPs with similar constituency problems, including Dale Campbell Savours and Chris Mullin, lobbied Angela Eagle, the environment minister, for action. She was sympathetic and one possibility that emerged would be to include it in the Crime and Disorder Bill, which seeks to tackle anti-social behaviour. Campaigners against Leylandii argued that neighbours who planted Leylandii and allowed them to grow uncontrollably were guilty of anti-social behaviour and should be outlawed by the Bill. The Bill has started its passage through Parliament in the Lords and will be debated in the Commons in spring.

But the Home Office rejected the idea on grounds that the Bill would become unwieldy. "There was no scope in the Crime and Disorder Bill to include an amendment," said a Home Office spokesman. But the MPs are determined to press on and are considering tabling their own amendment to the Bill. The Department of Environment is consulting local authorities on action it should take to stop the march of the giant invader.

— Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent

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PEOPLE



Queen of chat: Millions of Americans hang on Oprah Winfrey's every word

Oprah prepares for her cowboy showdown

Oprah Winfrey, America's formidable talk-show queen, prepared yesterday for a showdown in court with Texan cattlemen who claim an off-hand remark she made on air about mad cow disease sent the Atlantic.

Jury selection began yesterday in Amarillo, Texas, where Ms Winfrey is expected to testify in court next week. The cattlemen, who are seeking damages to compensate their claimed losses, will rest much of their evidence on the fact that after Ms Winfrey swore off hamburgers during a programme on BSF in April 1996, the value of beef futures on the Chicago exchange fell by one and a half cents. Ms Winfrey's lawyers are expected to testify that the two events were unrelated and that, besides, their client has a right to exercise her right to free speech unimpeded by ranchers, meat processors or anyone else.

The very fact that the case is being heard at all testifies to the extraordinary power Ms Winfrey enjoys to influence American opinion. Whether her ac-

cusers have any chance of winning the case or whether they will regret having brought it to court at all, drawing unnecessary attention as it does to a bovine problem that has so far seemingly failed to cross the Atlantic, remains to be seen.

What is clear for all to see, however, is that Ms Winfrey's impact on other commercial spheres is enormous. Dubbed "the most powerful woman in America" by *Life* magazine last year, she has demonstrated time and again that a word of recommendation from her, or even the merest suggestion of approval, can have a mighty beneficial impact on sales of books, records, films and women's clothes.

Her word is gold, in part, because no one can accuse her of having a financial stake in the products she endorses. Worth \$414m (£257m), according to *Fortune* magazine, she is the world's highest-paid entertainer.

— John Corbin, Washington

Sean, 12, is the youngest father

Sean Stewart became the youngest father in Britain yesterday when his girlfriend gave birth to a healthy son.

Sean, 12, last month, was allowed to miss school to be at the bedside of his 16-year-old girlfriend, Emma Webster, her parents, Ray and Shirley, and Sean's mother, Theresa. The pair, who are neighbours at Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, were 11 and 15 when Emma became pregnant. Sean and his mother moved next door to the Websters in November 1996 and he became Emma's boyfriend shortly after that. He is a 7th year at Margaret Beaufort School in the nearby village of Risley. Emma is studying for her GCSEs — including one in child care — at Sharnbrook Upper School.



Kate Watson-Smyth

Bardot guilty of race hate

Brigitte Bardot was convicted yesterday of "provoking racial hatred" for claiming Muslims would, one day, cut the throat of everyone in France. The former actress, 63, convicted of a similar offence last year, was fined £2,000 and ordered to pay for publishing the judgment in three French newspapers.

Bardot, an animal activist, has campaigned for years against the observance in France of Islamic festivals which require ritual throat-cutting of sheep and goats but her comments have become political, making a connection between ritual sheep-killing and the seemingly random murders committed by Islamic fundamentalist terror groups in Algeria. She is married to a former official of the far-right National Front.

— John Lichfield, Paris

by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman 7.30 FOR 8

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by Chris Priestley

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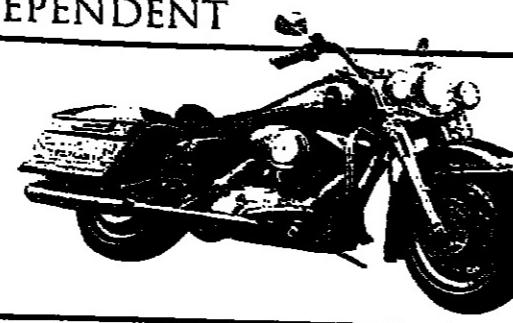
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What's it worth? Young artists put value of work to test

Stephen Chambers' oil painting *Red Noise* is one of the works by young British artists featured in Art 98, the London Contemporary Art Fair, which opens at the Business Design

Centre in Islington, north London, today. The exhibition also provides the first test of the new market values of the burgeoning contemporary art establishment. Many works

are commanding high prices. A Damien Hirst 'spin painting' – a circular canvas which Hirst places on a potter's wheel before depositing paint in it – is valued at £35,000

Senior Tories 'made a deal' with Chinese heroin trafficker

The Conservative Party came under increasing pressure last night to hand back the £1m donation it accepted from a heroin smuggler. Steve Boggan and Anthony Bevins look at fresh details of an alleged deal made with the Tories.

The family of Ma Sik-chun, the heroin smuggler who gave £1m to the Tory Party, yesterday claimed that three senior Conservatives knew that the money was given in return for "certain commitments".

In a letter to the party asking for the money back, Ma's son, Ma Ching-kwan, said former treasurers Lord Hambro and Lord Harris and the former Cabinet minister David Mellor were told the donation came with strings attached.

Mr Mellor, who was hired by the family's newspaper company as a consultant, firmly rejected the claims, while the lords declined to comment. Meanwhile, William Hague, the Tory leader, promised to return the cash if it was found to have come from an "illegal" source. The party's policy is never to accept donations with attached conditions.

In the House of Commons,

Labour MP Dennis Skinner said Ma Ching-kwan "comes from a family of recognised heroin-dealers in Hong Kong," and said the £1m should be given to charity.

"They [the Ma] did it because they wanted the father who had escaped to Taiwan to be brought back to Hong Kong," he said. "They used the offices of David Mellor and of Chris Patten. They handed over the money in the presence of the last prime minister."

It is understood the Ma family hoped the donation might smooth the return to Hong Kong of Ma senior, 59, who has been living as a fugitive in Taiwan since 1978. He jumped bail after being accused of involvement in one of South-east Asia's biggest heroin and opium rackets.

The family sparked the latest funding row on Monday when it published details of the £1m donation in its Hong Kong-based *Oriental Daily News*. It reproduced a Conservative Party receipt – numbered A10885, dated 29.6.94 – for the donation, accompanied by a picture of Mr Ma junior, CK Ma, with John Major at a Downing Street dinner. It also claimed that the party knew the money came from Ma senior, the fugitive.

In yesterday's edition, it reproduced a letter to Sir Brian Mawhinney, then the party chairman, dated 1 April 1997, in which CK Ma wrote that his family had been a "frequent and major" contributor but that he was "concerned that one of these contributions for £1,000,000 was made with certain commitments that, with a general election only a few weeks away, and with the uncertainties that the outcome ... there appears to have been no satisfactory outcome to the explicit expectations of my family..."

Various conversations regarding my family's expectations in supporting your party at a difficult time in its history took place with Lord Hambro, Sir Philip Harris, Rt Hon David Mellor and other senior parliamentary members of your party and there is no doubt in my mind that the expectations of my family were clearly understood by all concerned."

Mr Mellor issued a brief statement saying: "My dealings with the Oriental Press Group [the Ma family's publicly quoted company] were entirely proper and I would strongly resent any suggestion to the contrary."

Mr Hague said he had blocked all further overseas donations when he had taken over from John Major, and he added: "We would not accept money from illegal sources. If ever that turned out not to be the case ... then of course the money in question would be returned."

Reforms may force couples to plan their divorce before they marry

Couples will be encouraged to reach pre-nuptial agreements under controversial divorce law reforms being considered by the Government. But, Kim Sengupta discovers, such agreements already exist and judges are increasingly ready to accept them in court.

Forms of pre-nuptial agreements are not new to English common law. Wealthy families arranged settlements for wives built into marriage contracts for centuries. But all that changed in 1848 when in the case of *Cockedge v Cockedge*, judge Sir Lionel Shadwell condemned the practice for "enticing wives to engage in the most atrocious conduct". The Victorian fear was that certainty of a settlement was intrinsically destabilising to the family as it would encourage some wives to stray.

Now the Lord Chancellor's Department is considering changes to the divorce laws to bring them in line with the United States, Canada, Australia and most of the European Union and make pre-nuptial agreements legally enforceable. There is even the proposal of a penalty clause, with those without an agreement being forced to divide marital property 50:50 on divorce.

The proposed changes are also said to have the support of a ministerial task force on promoting the family chaired by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw. The process of taking out a pre-nuptial agreement would, it is believed, make people think seriously before taking such an important step. It would also help the Child Support Agency's efforts to make absent fathers pay contributions to their offspring. One minister is reported to have declared: "If it stops Sid Yobbo from having children, so much the better."

WINNERS AND LOSERS



A judge in London awarded Maya Flick, wife of Mercedes-Benz heir, Mick Flick, 5.3 per cent of his £9m fortune, despite a pre-nuptial agreement entitling her to much less



The entertainer Michael Jackson, worth £500m, has a pre-nuptial agreement with his wife, Debbie Rowe, which gives her no rights to a division of his fortune



Larry Fortensky had a pre-nuptial agreement entitling him to about £1m from his marriage to Elizabeth Taylor

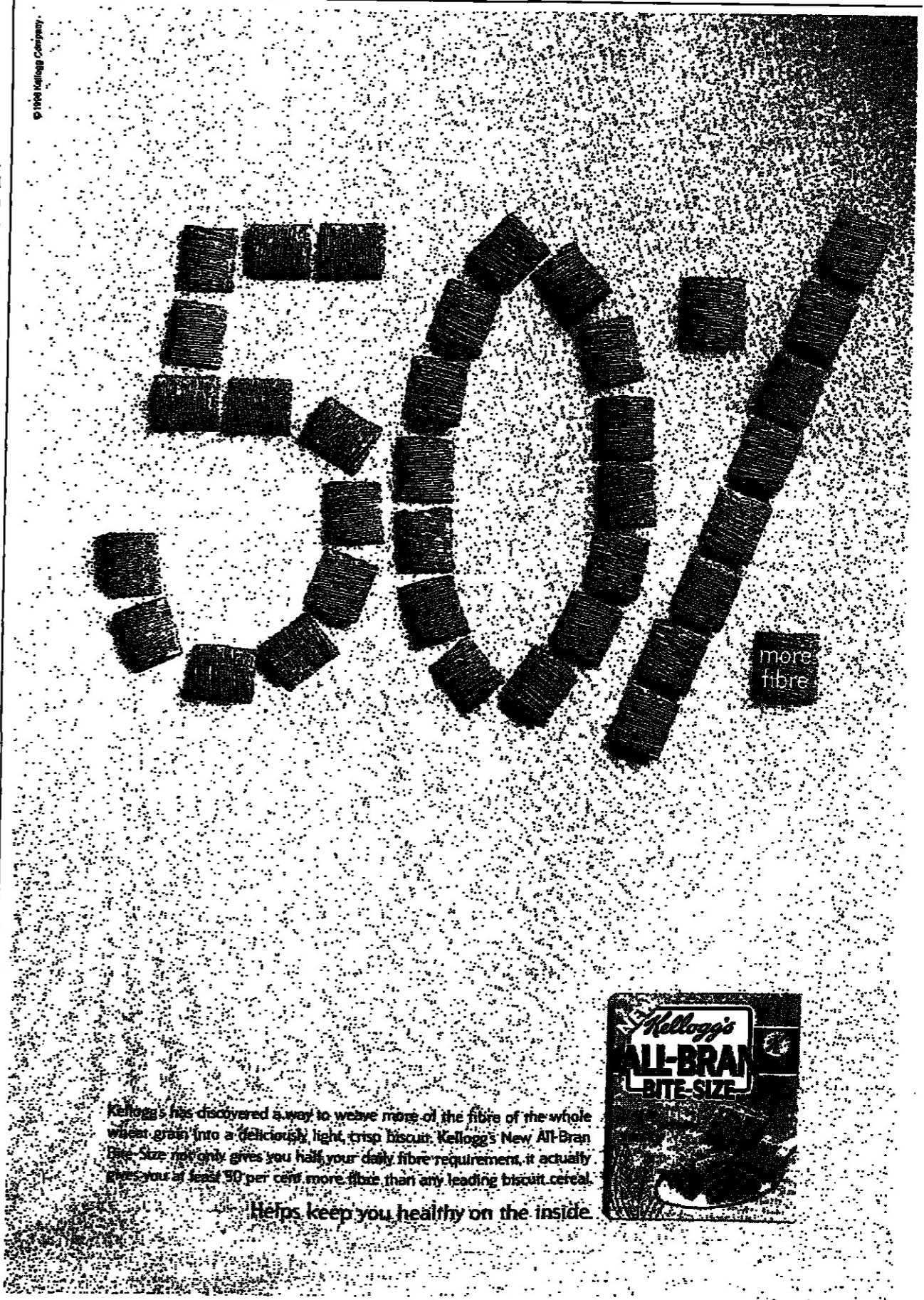
agreements should be overturned when they are deemed to be against natural justice. In the case of the Mercedes-Benz heir, Mick Flick, and his wife, Maya, which was heard in London, the judge awarded Mrs Flick 5.3 per cent of his £9m fortune, although under a pre-nuptial agreement she was only entitled to the "equivalent of the pension of a German judge".

Nicholas Mosely QC, a leading divorce barrister, said: "It is undoubtedly the case that a lot more people are arranging pre-nuptial contracts. I have drawn up quite a few, and the numbers have risen significantly in the last two years. In most of the cases, at least one of the partners is non-British, but there also some where both partners are British. You cannot force a court to enforce the agreement, but you can influence a court."

In the public perception pre-nuptial agreements are associated with the rich and famous: The Trumps, Liz Taylor and Larry Fortensky, Michael Jackson and his wife, Debbie, Mark Phillips and heiress Sandy Pfeifer. However, the less wealthy are also increasingly considering it. Stephen Armstrong and his Canadian-born wife Melinda, who live in Belsize Park, north-west London, are drawing up an agreement.

Mr Armstrong, a 38-year-old company director, said: "This is purely a form of insurance to avoid future unpleasantness, although we hope, of course, it will never have to be used. I have been married before and got badly stung at the divorce settlement. But the idea of the pre-nuptial contract in fact came from Mel. She has lived in the States, and of course it is not at all unusual there."

But Julia Cole, of the marriage guidance group Relate, warned: "Couples who go into this may find they have this contract hanging over them like a sword of Damocles ... One must also take into account that circumstances change during a marriage."



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Where's the beef? In Downing Street

A cow and her calf gate-crashed Downing Street yesterday as 3,500 farmers converged on Westminster to keep up the pressure for more help for their industry. Farmers have become the new militants of British industry but ministers have dug in their heels against further handouts after last month's £85m of extra aid.

Sir David Naish, President of the National Farmers' Union, protested that businesses were being "crippled by political disinterest in the plight of rural economies". The Prime Minister's spokesman said the Government could not solve all the industry's problems. "There have been difficulties for the beef industry," he said. "We have done what we can to help, but there are limits."

Farmers voiced their anger during a packed meeting near

the Commons and later met MPs. However the orderly lobby descended into chaos when a petition signed by more than half a million people was taken to Downing Street.

Police guarding the entrance to the street originally barred 750kg Mayflower and six-month-old Mayflower III on security grounds. But when the gates were opened to let in a van, there was a surge and both cow and calf ended up inside the gates, clearly panicking. Eventually they were calmed down and followed the delegation out of Downing Street.

Jack Cunningham, the agriculture minister, has rejected appeals to seek compensation of up to £980m from the European Commission to make up for the effects on farming of the strong pound.

— Stephen Goodwin



Photograph: PA

Mooove along there, please: the farmer pulls one way and the Downing Street policeman, enacting policy on the hoof, pulls the other

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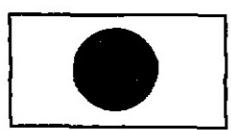
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Ulster victims' families beg for peace

Politicians in Northern Ireland yesterday sought to restore a sense of equilibrium to the peace process. David McKittrick, Ireland Correspondent, says they are hoping the recent cycle of violence has run its course.

Security patrols, including undercover activity, have been stepped up following the spate of attacks which left three men dead in a 36-hour period. In all, seven have been killed since 27 December, including five Catholic civilians and two loyalist activists.

The violence has brought a wave of condemnation together with calls for politicians not to be defected from the Stormont multi-party talks. Moving appeals have also been made by relatives of the dead for an end to the killings.

On Monday the killing of the loyalist Jim Guiney by the Irish National Liberation Army in the morning was followed by the killing of the Catholic taxi driver Larry Brennan that evening. Mr Brennan, 52, was engaged to a Protestant woman. His 71-year-old mother, Mary, said yesterday she was sure she would die of a broken heart. In 1972 one of her nephews was killed by loyalists.

Mr Brennan's sister, Mrs Eilish O'Reilly, said she did not want anyone else to die, adding: "I don't want anybody to take anybody's life in the name of my brother. All this has to stop. I know sometimes when you say this people don't listen – but nobody is to take any reprisals in the name of my brother."

"He was engaged to a girl

who was a Protestant, his best friends were two Protestant men. He always thought that if he minded his own business and didn't do anybody any harm he would always be all right."

The prime suspects for his killing are the Ulster Defence Association, the paramilitary group with which Jim Guiney was linked. Security sources believe the UDA carried out the killing or gave the go-ahead.

The Sinn Fein president, Gerry Adams, accused the UDA of being involved in some of the recent killings, alleging the organisation had a "no claim, no blame" policy. But he would not demand the expulsion of the Ulster Democratic Party, the UDA's political wing, from the Stormont talks. "We have always held the view that the loyalists and everybody else should be involved in these discussions, all of us."

The UDP leader, Gary McMichael, said in response that he had no evidence of UDA responsibility for the shooting. The Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, condemned the loyalist violence, describing those responsible as "criminal fools" who were being manipulated by republicans. "They are doing the work of republicans."

The Prime Minister's official spokesman said Mrs O'Reilly's words had struck a chord with Mr Blair. "He felt she spoke for what he feels most people think – that this kind of tit-for-tat killing is horrendous. When you hear the families saying 'For God's sake stop', people will hope that may have some influence. Our sense is that people involved in this process want that to be the place where all the arrangements are put in place."

Policeman guilty of assault

A police sergeant who slapped a 15-year-old girl he was trying to search was yesterday found guilty of common assault.

Stephen Piper, custody sergeant at Wood Street Police Station, Wakefield, west Yorkshire, said he slapped the girl in May last year, but pleaded not guilty to assault. Senior magistrate Guy Hodgson said he had used unreasonable force. The hearing in Bradford said the girl had been arrested when "ranting and raving" while trying to find out about her boyfriend, who had been arrested earlier. She was placed in a detention room before Sergeant Piper went with three other officers to carry out a routine search. Sergeant Piper said he slapped her across the face as she was being violent towards him and would not be searched.

E.coli butchers fined £2,250

The butchers business implicated in the world's worst E.Coli 0157 outbreak, in which 20 people died, was yesterday fined a total of £2,250 for food hygiene and safety breaches.

The partnership of John Barr & Son had originally faced four charges and its trial was due to start yesterday at Hamilton Sheriff Court, near Glasgow. John Barr, his wife Elaine, and son Martin, had been due to face three charges each relating to alleged breaches of food hygiene regulations at their shop in Wishaw in 1996. But the charges against the three individuals were dropped. The firm pleaded guilty to two charges similar to the original four it had faced.

PPL Therapeutics

PPL Therapeutics have asked us to point out that, contrary to our headline of 19 January, cloned sheep do not develop abnormalities. Lambs that were healthy at birth remained healthy. The losses of sheep referred to in the article comprised late stage abortion, still birth or lambs that were not healthy when born and that did not survive.

BBC
The BBC has its poet in residence... Arts News meets the extremely politicised versifier who has the job and who poetry spread throughout the corporation and its programmes.

Alan Ri
wasting

Taking Shakespeare's history of society from through to stage to raise to farm more than a pre
Arts News
An Interview's accu

BBC's first poet in residence takes verse to all corners

The BBC has its first poet in residence. David Lister, Arts News Editor, meets the extrovert and highly politicised versifier who has landed the job and who wants poetry spread throughout the corporation and its programmes.

A poet can versify in gardening and cookery programmes. There can be "a poem from the pulpit" in *Songs of Praise*. John Agard, the BBC's first poet in residence, intends to put himself about.

Agard, 49, has already had published best-selling anthologies aimed at adults and children, and one collection for teenagers, *Get Back Purple*.

Yesterday, he was seconded by the Poetry Society to the BBC as poet in residence. The Poetry Society has won £450,000 of lottery money for residencies and placements, and already has poets in Kew Gardens and Marks and Spencer.

Bearded with a pony tail, gesticulating expansively, going through a range of Caribbean dialects and fixing the audience with intense stares followed by whimsical darting glances, Agard is a performance poet extraordinaire, as he showed in a Poetry Society reading yesterday.

He was one of 30 applicants for the BBC post, advertised as for Afro-Caribbeans only. This is because the main focus of the six-month residency costing £10,000, will be the "Windrush" season of programmes to mark the 50th anniversary of the first 500 settlers from the Caribbean on the troopship MV *Empire Windrush* in May 1948.

Chris Meade, director of the Poetry Society, said: "We're confident this residency will inspire John and the people he'll be working with. He'll be taking poetry to the heart of the BBC."

Steve Pollock, head of BBC Education, added: "As well as everything else I would expect



Poetic exploration: John Agard, the BBC's first poet in residence, reading his work at the Poetry Cafe in Covent Garden, central London, yesterday. Photograph: John Voos

him to sit in the canteen and help those people who feel less than enthusiastic and dedicated to get their creative juices going. He will be a catalyst for creativity."

Agard will, it was confirmed, have input into programming ideas and yesterday he was already arguing for poetry spots in cookery, gardening and *Songs of Praise*.

The poet said: "There will be the occasional workshop for BBC staff. But I don't see what I'm doing as therapy."

"Poetry is often presented in the media as something very precious. But there's no reason why, if there's a programme on gardening or cooking you can't have a poem on gardening or

cooking. Poetry can be presented in a much more vibrant way. A poem from the pulpit in *Songs of Praise*, for example. People say they don't read poetry but they seek out their favourite poems for weddings and funerals. So much of our lives are marked out with linear maps. Poetry gives another map."

Talking of the Caribbean connection and areas for poetic exploration, Agard, who came to Britain in 1977 from Guyana, said: "It's very important that the light has been iconised and the dark demonised ... The Caribbean diaspora has been a cause of cultural enrichment. This has got to be got across to the people of Britain."

Alan Rickman says RSC is wasting young actors' talent

The Royal Shakespeare Company has a history of seeing young actors through to stardom. But one who rose to fame now says it's little more than a production line. David Lister, Arts News Editor, hears Alan Rickman's accusations.

The Royal Shakespeare Company has been condemned by its former star Alan Rickman for neglecting young talent. Its young actors are "dropping like flies," he claims.

The company has a history of nurturing numerous future stars – from Diana Rigg, Judi Dench and Helen Mirren to Kenneth Branagh and Ralph Fiennes. Rickman himself rose to fame with the company's production of *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* before pursuing a film career – he has just directed a film, *The Winter Guest*, starring Emma Thompson.

In the current issue of *The Stage* magazine, Rickman says it is a miracle that young talent comes through the RSC system. He also criticised the company in a talk he gave at the National Film Theatre: "It's a factory. It has to be. It's all about product endlessly churning out – not sufficiently about process," he said. "They don't look after the young actors ... People are dropping like flies, doing too many shows at once. There ought to be someone who helps them develop." He went on to express unsought sympathy for the RSC's artistic director Adrian Noble: "I remember when Noble was a young, fresh talent. Now he's weighed down by running buildings and financial concerns."

In fact, Noble has two productions, Shakespeare's *Cymbeline* and Ibsen's *Little Eyolf*, at the Barbican Centre, both of which have been acclaimed by the critics. And no actors work in more than three productions. It can be argued, though, that the RSC has not had a blockbuster production for some time, and has not been as successful with ticket sales recently as the National Theatre.

An RSC spokesman said Rickman was "out of touch" with the company's activities. It specialised in developing young talent, he said, with experts giving actors classical skills, voice and movement classes. "Alan Rickman's premise is entirely false," he said. "Over the years, the RSC had had a marvellous record in moving on talent. Nearly all of the great artists on stage and sometimes in film – I'd include Alan Rickman in that – have been through that 'factory' that is the RSC. It's not an accusation that holds well. It's fashionable to take that line, but it's patently untrue."

COMPANY OF STARS



DAME JUDI DENCH is one of many actors who learnt their craft at the RSC before moving to the National Theatre and into television and films. She was a memorable Lady Macbeth, but she also excelled at comedy, notably in Trevor Nunn's 1976 musical of *The Comedy of Errors*.



KENNETH BRANAGH gained his national reputation at the RSC, recording in his biography how he was "breveted", hugged by the then artistic director Trevor Nunn after playing Henry the Fifth. The film of *Henry the Fifth* that he later directed and starred in owed much to his time with the RSC.



HELEN MIRREN was a young, sexy Hermia in the company's seminal 1970 *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Peter Brook. The set was a white box, the fairy king entered on a trapeze and the RSC not for the first or last time broke the mould. Mirren's film career was just about to take off.

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Life for men who killed drug dealers

The murders of three drug dealers in a Range Rover in a quiet Essex lane fed to massive publicity. Yesterday, their killers were convicted at the Old Bailey. Kim Sengupta charts a tale of drugs, greed and retribution.

At the trial of two of the men charged with murdering Pat Tate, Anthony Tucker and Craig Rolfe, prosecutor Andrew Munday declared the three victims "were not angels", but "notwithstanding their past they had the right to live". Yesterday, at the Old Bailey, Michael Steele, 55, and Jack Whomes, 36, were both given three life sentences for the murders - which they denied - with a recommendation that they serve a minimum of 15 years.

By any social yardstick the three drug dealers shot dead in a Range Rover on a deserted farm track in Essex in December 1995 were bad men. They took professional pride in violence, meted out savage beatings and maimings, and are strongly suspected of carrying out at least one particularly sadistic murder. Tate, 37, Tucker, 38, and Rolfe, 26, all of Essex, made vast amounts of money from drugs, often using as a network a security business run by Tucker which provided bouncers for nightclubs in Essex and east London. One of these clubs was Raquel's where the ecstasy tablet which killed teenager Leah Betts was bought in November 1995.

Tucker boasted of being a friend of the stars. He had acted as a minder for boxer Nigel Benn who said after his death: "I have known him since I came out of the Army - it's very tragic." Tucker and Rolfe both had minor convictions. Tate

had a much more serious criminal history, including drug offences and armed robbery.

The trio were well placed to take advantage of a tide of narcotics pouring in from the Continent through Essex and East Anglia. Tucker and his men were not averse to tipping off fellow villains. Their violent reputation was normally sufficient to ensure others swallowed the losses.

The feud that led to the Range Rover murders at Retford was over drugs. Tate had met Michael Steele and Jack Whomes while they all served time at Hollesley Bay Prison in Suffolk.

In November 1995, Steele supplied a consignment of cannabis with a street value of around £350,000 to Tate, Tucker and Rolfe. But the quality was so poor that Steele agreed to take back the cannabis and return a deposit of around £70,000. The money was paid, but Tate denied getting it and also failed to return one-third of the drugs haul. He threatened to shoot Steele after making him beg on his knees.

In retaliation, Steele enticed Tate, Tucker and Rolfe to a meeting in the quiet country lane on a cold, snowy night with the promise of a cocaine consignment. Tate and his friends had plans of their own they intended to seize the drugs and, if necessary, eliminate the courier. Instead, they were killed.

At the Old Bailey one of the men charged with the murders, 31-year-old Darren Nicholls, of Braintree, Essex, gave evidence for the Crown. He claimed he picked up Steele and Whomes after the murders, and Whomes had specks of blood on his gloves. Steele reportedly said: "They won't fuck us again", and he said he had "felt like an angel of death - done everyone a favour and got rid of the sort of people you would not want around".

Sporting hand: Peterborough United football players admiring some of the works in the Art Treasures of England exhibition at the Royal Academy. The club is sponsoring the three-month exhibition

Photograph: David Rose

Diana fund to seek tenders after fees row

Trustees of the Diana Memorial Fund are to put all work out to tender. The decision follows the row over a £500,000 legal bill, says Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent.

The fund trustees publicly thanked their lawyers, Mishcon de Reya, who will continue to carry out legal work until the tendering process is com-

plete. A spokesman for the firm, whose senior partner Anthony Julius is also acting chairman of the trustees, said it welcomed the news and added that it had always advocated a tendering system for the fund. However, the spokesman, Jonathan Cameron, said there was a possibility that the lawyers may not bid for future work.

Mishcon, a publicity-conscious firm, suffered a public grilling last week after a newspaper revealed that the firm had charged the fund

£500,000 since the Princess's death. The company pointed out that Mr Julius was working for the fund without payment and the legal fees were discounted by 20 per cent.

Yesterday the newly enlarged board of trustees met and expressed confidence in him as interim chairman, though it repeated its intention to elect a permanent successor "in due course".

After thanking Mishcon for its work, the board added in a statement: "It is extending procedures for

tendering for all professional services. It will continue to review all charges to the fund by professional and other providers of services."

A fund spokesman said the statements had been made to "clarify" the situation following last week's publicity. Mishcon de Reya would continue with its work until the tendering process began. That would start after the appointment of a £75,000-a-year chief executive. The fund has begun advertising and has had more than 300 applications.

CID suspensions

Three more officers from a town's police force which carried out a "zero tolerance" policy on crime have been suspended as part of a corruption investigation, it emerged yesterday.

This takes the total number of suspensions in Middlesbrough CID to seven officers, with a further four being moved from CID to other departments.

The investigation began in September last year after two defendants changed their pleas at trial. In December, Ray Mallon the head of Middlesbrough CID, and architect of the Cleveland force's controversial crime policy, was also suspended.

Women unhappy with pregnancy care, survey reveals

Almost half of women are not completely happy with the care they receive during pregnancy, labour and after the birth of their baby, it was revealed yesterday.

A survey of almost 2,500 women in England and Wales by the independent spending watchdog the Audit Commission found that only between 50

per cent and 60 per cent strongly agreed that the care they received was good. And standards in maternity care varied significantly between regions.

For example, in the North, 36 per cent of women have more than 16 antenatal visits compared with 41 per cent in the South-east who have 10 or

under. And whereas 15 per cent of women in the South-west and North-west stay in hospital six days or more following the birth, in East Anglia 23 per cent of women go home with in 24 hours.

The maternity service most likely to be criticised was hospital postnatal care, the report

found. Areas of particular concern were the contradictory advice given about breast feeding and low staffing levels.

In common with other studies, the survey shows that women want more information about their options and about the care that is provided before, during and after birth.

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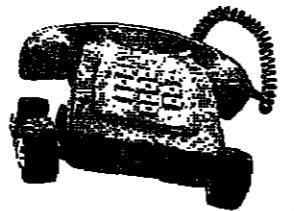
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7/DISPATCHES

THE INDEPENDENT
WEDNESDAY
21 JANUARY 1998

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Algeria rejects UN help as stunned survivors tell of massacre horror

A bus bomb killed one and wounded at least 20 in central Algiers yesterday during the EU delegates' visit.

Photograph: AFP

CID suspensions
Hypnosis plea fails
Boycott fined for beating up lover

The European Union has received a humiliating rebuff in its cautious attempts to reduce the bloodshed in Algeria. At the scene of one recent massacre, which visiting ministers were banned from visiting, our correspondent found private horror and public deceit.

Foreign Office minister Derek Fatchett, leading a one-day EU ministerial trip to Algeria, said that the EU's mission to Algeria had been an "important step". At the end of a day of talks with newspaper editors, government ministers and representatives of the official opposition, he spoke of "taking the dialogue with Algeria further", after a visit which took place "in a spirit of partnership". And he talked of the "European solidarity at the terror and pain" of the Algerian people.

As Mr Fatchett spoke, the violence continued. Sixteen people were reported to have been killed in an attack on a bus east of Algiers. In central Al-

giers, one person was killed in a bus bomb yesterday afternoon and at least 20 were wounded. Authorities, who sharply restrict correspondents' movements, prevented foreign journalists from visiting the scene.

There could be no hiding the fact that the EU's first attempt at mediation in Algeria has backfired, even worse than its early and doomed involvement in Yugoslavia.

Algerians do not want help of the kind that the EU is offering – and the EU is reluctant to talk tough. Mr Fatchett shied away like a bolting horse from a questioner who asked whether sanctions against Algeria might be considered, if other methods fail. Looking nervously at the Algerian deputy foreign minister who was sitting beside him, he said that the question was "jumping a long way down the road".

In reality, however, the mission signally failed two important tests. Algeria flatly refused European requests for a visit by a United Nations rapporteur on human rights, first proposed last year. And the ministers were refused permission to visit the site of a notorious recent massacre at Sidi Hamed, less than 20

miles from Algiers, where it would have been possible to hear survivors' accounts firsthand.

Mr Fatchett's official statement expressed "regret" at the Algerian refusal to allow a UN rapporteur to visit, and also at the "security and practical rea-

sions" which had made it impossible to visit Sidi Hamed. Some European diplomats were more outspoken, however, admitting that the delegation had in effect been slapped in the face.

At the massacre site where more than 100 people died, the nightmare of what happened is difficult to grasp – even, it sometimes seems, for the still dazed survivors. In the village video room where the attack began at around 8pm on Saturday 10 January, a blood-soaked jacket still lies on the floor, together with piles of the victims' shoes. A bloody handprint claws at the wall. Seven-

teen were killed in this room alone when a bomb exploded, followed by shooting. Still-banded surviving children described yesterday how they escaped through a window.

The attack on the video room was, however, was only the beginning of Sidi Hamed's apocalypse. Walk through the burnt-out ruins of the village, and you come on shocked survivors, sitting or standing hopelessly in what were once their homes. In an empty voice, one survivor (nobody here wants to give their names) describes how his three children had their throats cut in this small room. His wood-chopping axe was used as an additional murder weapon, and is still splattered with his children's blood.

And so it goes on – such multiple tales of horror that the very act of listening feels like a crime. At the cemetery, dozens of fresh graves suggest that the official death toll of 103 is, if anything, understated; many villagers say that around 200 died. Other bodies are buried in cemeteries nearby.

The villagers' personal horror is accompanied by political deceit. When you manage to find privacy from the armed men who seek to listen in to every conversation, villagers tell a unanimous story: that the army, which has a base less than half a kilometre from the edge of the village, did not intervene until the massacre was over.

One man – alerted by his teenage son, who managed to run away even as his four friends' throats were cut – hid with his small children in the trees outside the village. The killings continued for an hour.

"The army arrived at the edge of the village after a quarter of an hour. But they did not go into the village. The terrorists stayed for another hour."

A generous view is that the army was too frightened. But it is clear that many in Sidi Hamed fear some kind of complicity. Either way, the government has done nothing to expose the army's inaction – which fits with a pattern of allegations in recent months.

Villagers always stop telling you their story when yet another armed man in uniform sidles into earshot. Most chillingly of all, a policeman declared, after overhearing part of one man's harrowing story: "I think he's a terrorist." Why? "Because he's still alive."

Survey reveals
Castro's historic gamble: can the Pope help Cuba to come in from the cold?

Fidel Castro is preparing his country for the papal visit, on which the Cuban leader is taking a huge risk given the Pope's anti-Communism record. Susie Morgan reports from Havana.

The incongruous combination of Catholicism and Marxism-Leninism that epitomises Cuba can be seen vividly in Havana's Revolution Square. Against a huge backdrop of Che Guevara, the country's most famous revolutionary guerrilla icon and martyr, the Havana orchestra – complete with traditional guitars and maracas and flanked by Catholic priests in sumptuous robes – is busy rehearsing



Holy icon: Two Cubans paste up a poster of the Pope in Havana yesterday. It reads 'messenger of love and hope'
Photograph: Eric Draper/AP

around the recently built chapel for the Pope's Mass here next Sunday. It will mark the finale of the Pontiff's historic five-day visit to Cuba, his first ever to this isolated Communist outpost with its – by now weak – Catholic tradition.

The visit is seen as having enormous political significance, even though the church is at pains to stress that the visit's purpose is solely spiritual and intended to strengthen the Catholic Church, not to involve itself in political matters, let alone attempt to topple Fidel Castro. But, given that John Paul II is credited with having helped end Communism in Eastern Europe as an indirect result of his appeals for freedom and respect for human rights, there is conjecture about the visit's longer-term political repercussions.

The visit – a huge gamble

by Mr Castro – is seen as an attempt by the veteran revolutionary to end his country's isolation, gain respectability by receiving the world's moral leader and obtain favourable publicity (more than 3,000 foreign journalists, half of them from the United States, have been accredited for the visit). He also expects the Pope to speak out against the longstanding US embargo that has bitten deeply into the country's economy. Some analysts, however, believe he needs the embargo as a figleaf to explain the failure of his system and could face greater political difficulties if it ended.

Others believe both Mr Castro and the Pope could gain from the encounter. "I think Fidel can use this visit to his advantage, at least in the short-term, and that the Pope

can obtain what he wants – the strengthening of the Catholic church here," one Cuban analyst commented.

This is a key goal given that the Catholic church has lost some 40 million Catholic believers in Latin America over the past 10 years, most to evangelical Protestant movements. But, unique to Cuba, there is another very important Afro-Caribbean religion, known as Santeria, which was introduced by African slaves and which some experts say is of greater importance than either of the established Christian churches – although many Cubans practice both Christianity and Santeria. Religious analysts say one of the Pope's aims is to reclaim these "pagan" worshippers.

To underline the fact that there is no conflict between Communism and Catholicism – and to ensure that the important papal visit goes smoothly, Fidel Castro has been at pains to prepare his nation for the event. Last Friday, he gave a six-hour televised address to explain to Cubans that he and the Pope see eye to eye on many key issues and to instruct Cubans to turn out in force for the masses to be held throughout the country over the coming week.

A number of older Cubans admitted that they found their leader's U-turn hard to accept but said they would obey his instructions.

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9/SCIENCE

Islands face tax inquiry

Q: What do you get when you cross a llama with a camel?

A: More wool, a nicer temperament, a better size – and a hybrid called a 'cama'

Crossing a camel with a llama hasn't been possible for 30 million years. Now Lulu Skidmore, a British scientist, has managed the feat to produce the "cama". Charles Arthur, Science Editor, reports.

Lulu Skidmore has been trying for two years to cross a camel and a llama. In mad transatlantic dashes, couriers would take a package of sperm collected at a llama ranch in Montana, get on a plane in Minneapolis, run across Gatwick Airport to catch a plane to Dubai, and hurry from there to the Camel Reproduction Centre.



Lulu Skidmore: Putting the clock back 30 million years

tion Centre, where a surprised camel would be roused at midnight to be artificially inseminated. The reason for the hurry was that the sperm only remain potent for 24 hours. However, that problem was solved when Ms Skidmore, a British citizen who is the Centre's technical director – and a world expert in camel reproduction – discovered a zoo across the road had some captive llamas. Suddenly, the problems eased.

"All research has its ups and downs," said the 34-year-old scientist yesterday. "But this makes it worth all that hassle." The object of her pleasure is Rama, a cross between a male camel and a female llama that

she has dubbed a "cama". The newborn animal has no hump (unlike its father) but the short ears and long tail of a camel. It has cloven hooves, like a llama, distinct from the single footpad of the camel. For now, he is being bottle-fed on camel's milk.

Born exactly a week ago, Rama turns back the evolutionary clock 30 million years, to a time when the common ancestor of camels and llamas lived in North America.

The ancestors of camels made their way to Africa across a land bridge over the Bering Strait, while those of modern-day llamas headed south. Thus the species now occupy totally different environments – camels in dry, hot environments at sea level, while the llama family exists in the thin air at 20,000ft at temperatures as low as -20C.

Other crosses such as mules and zeehorses (zebra-horse hybrids) are sterile, though there are hopes that the cama will not be. Another cross – between a female camel and a male llama – is due in May or June. The work is funded by Sheikh Mohammed, who uses Dr Skidmore's expertise to breed faster racing camels.

At the Equine Fertility Centre in Newmarket, Professor Twink Allen, who was Dr Skidmore's former tutor, said: "If [the cama] is fertile, then it would mean we have created a new species – and given that these days we are wiping species out daily, that would be a good thing. It's nothing like Dolly [the cloned sheep] but to have done it at all is a great achievement."

Rama, who weighed 12lbs at birth, was slightly premature, born after a gestation of ten and a half months. "We hope it will have the best qualities of both animals," said Dr Skidmore.

"Llamas can be useful pack animals, but they're a bit flighty and silly, while camels can be stubborn. If you could get a temperament between the two, that could be very useful." She said the cama should have the prized fleece of the llama, but because of its larger size it should give more wool.



Continental drift: A worker at Dubai's Camel Reproduction Centre with the 'cama'. This is a cross between an Old World camel, above, and a New World llama, below. Main photograph: Reuters



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11/WORK

Wanted: a tough new law to promote women

The Blair government was yesterday challenged to introduce a 'super law' aimed at giving women a fast track to equality. Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, explains that ministers and employers may want to temper justice with considerations of cost and potential conflict.

The Equal Opportunities Commission yesterday called for a tough new law which could force employers to promote women where they had been the victims of discrimination.

Under the proposals, industrial tribunals could also demand that women were taken back into jobs where they proved they were dismissed because of gender bias.

In a report issued as part of a three-month consultation exercise, the commission argues that employers should be ordered to continue to pay compensation as long as they refuse to take corrective action. At the moment, tribunals can only order a "one-off" payment to the aggrieved party.

While employers may contend that such a law would constitute a considerable burden and lead to conflict at the workplace, the Government may prevaricate over the EOC's main proposal for legislation, which it wants to be introduced during this parliament. It is demanding a single "equal treatment" Act which would give women a fast track to equality. Given that women's earnings are just 80 per cent of men's, such legislation could lead to claims worth billions and ministers may feel the need to phase in such a provision.

Kamlesh Bahl, chairwoman of the commission, said legislation was a "mess and a nightmare", with more than a dozen British laws plus European di-

rectives. There was an urgent need for a review and a major overhaul, she said.

In some cases, it took more than a decade for women to claim equal pay and with pregnancy and maternity statutes were complicated and contradictory and were a disincentive to the employment of women.

The commission's chairwoman argued that equal opportunity was a fundamental right and that both the Government and employers would see the legitimacy of a review.

A new law would save them millions of pounds in legal fees and address employer's demands for "clarity", she said.

The consultation paper,

which will go to all interested individuals and organisations, calls for a fundamental change from the emphasis on fighting discrimination to promoting "the positive right to equal treatment". Commissioners would make employers responsible for promoting equal opportunities – another possible bone of contention – and extend protection to include cases involving sexual orientation and "gender reassignment".

A suggestion that might concern the armed forces, however, is the contention that sexual discrimination laws concerning the military should be amended. At the moment, the forces are allowed to discriminate in cases where they believe "combat effectiveness" could be impaired by ensuring equality. Ms Bahl believes that the only factor to be considered in recruitment or promotion is whether the candidate has the relevant experience, qualifications and abilities.

Ms Bahl acknowledged that there had been significant changes in society since the current legislation was drawn up more than 20 years ago and that men sometimes now felt they were victims. In particular the commission was investigating the academic under-achievement



Fight against injustice: Pam Enderby took more than a decade to win her claim for equal pay

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

'After more than a decade of fighting for equality, my friends are still wanting to know when the drinks will be on me'

Pam Enderby became aware of the injustice of her position 11 years ago. After huge legal fees expended by the Equal Opportunities Commission and her union to win her equal pay – and a similar amount expended by the National Health Service to deny her extra money – she is still waiting for compensation.

Last summer it was finally agreed that as a speech therapist in the health service her work was of equal value to that undertaken by pharmacists and psychologists.

"After more than a decade, my friends are still waiting to know when the drinks will be on me," she said.

Ms Enderby, 47, was paid considerably less than her male colleagues. As head of her hospital department, she found she was under very similar pressures to them. In fact she had a larger staff and a wider area of research to cover than her opposite number in the psychology department.

Part of her difficulty has been that she was invoking law which means women who perform work of "equal value" to men should be paid the same. This law is something of a minefield. It is easier – but not without difficulty – to win equal pay for the same job.

The concept of equal value is fraught with difficulty and the NHS decided to exploit the problems to the full. However, 1,200 other cases hinge on the Enderby judgment and it could cost the health service £30m in back pay and legal costs. The EOC and the MSF union have been landed with a legal bill in excess of £100,000.

Ms Enderby's case, according to the commission, is a shining example of the Byzantine nature of present legislation and the urgent need to reform it. She has since left the health service to become professor of community rehabilitation at Sheffield

University. "The problem with a lot of female professions is that there is a 'ceiling' that is not the case in male dominated professions. Men were always expected to have a career."

Her new job uses her expertise in speech therapy; but many of her colleagues have to leave the specialist to go into hospital management. She believes there is a potential for change under the present government. "It was obvious that under the previous administration there was an absence of political will. Every obstacle was put in one's way." — Barrie Clement

The home working revolution has stalled

The brave new world where most of us were expected to work at home in front of a computer has not happened.

In the 1980s it was estimated that around half the labour force could become "teleworkers". Yet little over a million people are estimated to work from home, and many are in low-paid, unskilled jobs owing little to technology. Apparently only 6 per cent of organisations have such arrangements, according to a report out yesterday.

Many industries were simply not suited to teleworking and some managers were suspicious of the whole idea. There seemed to be problems of "ignorance, mistrust and envy" among both managers and colleagues and a belief that home-workers were "getting away with something", the report said. Not all employees had the requisite self-contained personality, the "understanding partner" or the spacious homes to deal with.

Interviews with 62 home-workers, mostly professionals and managers, showed work-related stress was reduced but family problems were exacerbated, the researchers, Dr Yehuda Baruch and Professor Nigel Nicholson, said. They found nevertheless that an overwhelming majority felt that working from home made them better performers and wanted to continue. Most of the sample had volunteered to work from home with only 1 in 10 saying it had been imposed on him or her.

The study, *Home, sweet work: requirements for effective home-working*, sponsored by Sun Life Assurance, found there was a clear need for self-management and self-discipline among such workers. Extroverts could suffer "social deprivation" from the absence of workmates, it said.

While the authors acknowledged advantages in home-working, they expressed concern about the creation of an "autistic society" in which a lack of contact with others might render teleworkers less able to deal with strangers. Teleworking might be for "the few rather than the many", they said.

— Barrie Clement

MINOTEL
Great Britain

THE INDEPENDENT
CITY BREAK QUESTIONNAIRE

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Dear Reader,

Have you been on a city break in the last 12 months? If so, then we would like to hear from you. By filling in the questionnaire you have the chance to win a UK City Break at one of the following hotels: Five Lakes Hotel, Golf & Country Club, Maldon, Essex, are offering a two night 'Pamper time' stay in an en-suite room with English breakfast. The pampering includes massage, facial and manicure with an evening meal from the table d'hôte in the award winning Camelot restaurant. Or have a weekend break in the Minotel Herald House Hotel in a double or twin room with a full English breakfast where you can take advantage of their courtyard bar and acclaimed restaurant. The hotel is situated in the heart of Edinburgh only a few minutes walk from Princes Street. Offers are based on two people sharing and subject to availability and confirmation by the hotel. Winners to be drawn at random.

Please send your completed questionnaire to: City Break Questionnaire, Freepost 13583, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5DL, to arrive no later than 31st January 1998.

1. How many city breaks holidays in the UK have you had in the last 12 months (excluding visits to family and friends)?

None (go to Q3) 5) 0 Three 3

One 1 Four+ 4

Two 2

Other - please state..... 7-8

3. How many city break holiday abroad have you had in the last 12 months (excluding visits to family and friends)?

None (go to Q5) 8) 0 Three 3

One 1 Four+ 4

Two 2

Other - please state.....

8. Regarding your choice of accommodation, how would you rate the following in order of importance, with 1 being not at all important and 5 being very important?

Price/deal 14) 1

Picture in brochure/paper 15) 1

Type of hotel 16) 1

Location 17) 1

Facilities 18) 1

Other 19) 1

2. And which cities in the UK did you stay in?

London on 1 occasion 6) 1 Cardiff 7) 1

London on 2+ occasions 2) 2 Edinburgh 2

Bath 3) 3 Leeds 3

Birmingham 4) 4 Oxford 4

Brighton 5) 5 Manchester 5

Bristol 6) 6 Stratford 6

Cambridge 7) 7 York 7

Canterbury 8) 8

Other - please state..... 7-8

9. What was the cost in total per person?

£50 or under 20) 1 £251-£350 4

£51-£150 2) 2 £351+ 5

£51-£250 3) 3

Other - please state.....

10. What was the main method of transport to your last city break destination?

Own car 21) 1 Rail 4

Hired car 2) 2 Air 5

Ferry/ hovercraft 3) 3 Coach 6

Other - please state..... 8

11. From the following list choose the three most important factors influencing your choice of city destination.

Price 22) 1

Museums/places of historic interest 2) 2

Nightclubs 4) 4

Shopping 5) 5

Theatres/shows 6) 6

Restaurants/food 7) 7

Distance from home 8) 8

Country 9) 9

Recommendations from friends 10) 10

Newspaper article 23) 1

TV programme 2) 2

An event in the city 3) 3

Other - please state..... 8

12. How did you book your last city break?

Through a travel agent 24) 1

Teletext 2) 2

Telephone direct to company 3) 3

Through a newspaper 4) 4

Through a magazine 5) 5

Other - please state..... 8

13. Which of the following do you use for information about what to do on your city break?

Guide book 25) 1

Tourist information 2) 2

Newspaper articles 3) 3

Advice from friends 4) 4

Television holiday programmes 5) 5

Other - please state..... 8) 8

14. Have you ever been on any of the following holidays within the UK in the last 12 months?

Health farm 26) 1

Boating 2) 2

Golf 3) 3

Murder mystery 4) 4

Other..... 3) 3

15. Have you ever responded to any advertising in The Independent or Independent on Sunday regarding a holiday?

Yes 27) 1 No 2) 2

16. Which of the following national quality newspapers do you read during the week (ie. Monday-Friday) and on a Saturday?

Daily Telegraph 28) 1

Financial Times 2) 2

The Guardian 3) 3

The Independent 4) 4

The Times 5) 5

17. And which of the following quality Sunday newspapers do you read almost always (A/A), quite often (Q/O), only occasionally (O/O) or never?

A/A 29) 1

Q/O 2) 2

O/O 3) 3

Never 4) 4

ABOUT YOU

Sex 34) Male 1 Female 2

Age 35) 15-24 1 45-54 4

25-34 2 55-64 5

35-44 3 65+ 6

Working status

36) Full time (30hrs+ per week) 1

Part time 2

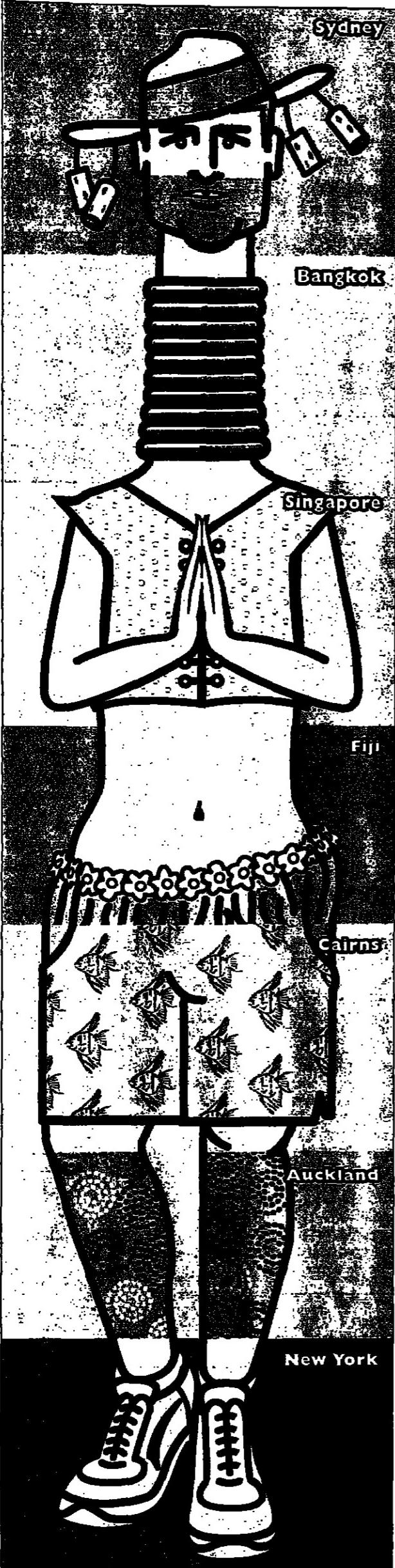
Studying full time 3

Unemployed 4

Retired 5

Not working 6

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Germans demand return of 'stolen' art

Germany's Wuppertal museum is claiming the French stole 16 works of art at the end of the war - including a Renoir. The French insist they were bought fairly by the Vichy regime. John Lichfield reports on a startling reversal of roles.

A German museum is demanding the return of 16 works of art which it claims were

seized by French troops at the end of the Second World War.

The formal request, by the Von de Heydt Museum in Wuppertal, near Bonn, has been frostily rejected by the French authorities. "It is like bumping into granite," says the museum director, Sabine Fehlemann.

Paris does not deny that the works, including a sketch by Auguste Renoir and two paintings by Eugène Delacroix, were "repatriated" from the Wuppertal museum in 1945. It does not deny that the paintings

were purchased, openly and legally, by the German museum in the Paris art market during the war.

But the French government points out that the franc had been steeply devalued from 1940, on Nazi orders, and Vichy France had been forced to pay large sums in "reparations" to Hitler's Germany. As a result, German buyers were flush with francs and able to buy French art-works at absurdly low "real" prices. By an edict of the provisional de Gaulle government in London in 1943, ratified by

the French parliament after the war, all purchases made under the German occupation were declared null and void.

Ms Fehlemann testily rejects such accusations. She points out that she is, herself, a quarter Jewish and that Germany also suffered artistic devastation in the Nazi period.

Her own museum, she says, had 180 works of art confiscated by the Nazis as "degenerate" in 1937-8. It then lost another 80 works, including 36 paintings, after the Allies invaded Germany in 1945. Some of these works, she insists, were pur-

chased long before the war. "We were pillaged twice, first by the Nazis and then by the Allies."

Other German museums and art collections have declined to follow Ms Fehlemann's lead so far. The German government says it supports her initiative but is unwilling to press the case directly with the French authorities. Françoise Cachin, director of French national museums, commented: "Quite honestly, I can't see how it would be in Bonn's interest to associate itself with the actions of the Nazis."



Trouble brewing: Smoke rises from the central craters of Mt Etna in Sicily yesterday. Since 10 January Europe's tallest active volcano at 3,300 meters has been shaken by more than 100 small earthquakes. Etna's last eruption was six years ago but fears are rising of a major activity

Photograph: Fabrizio Villa/AP

Turkey's Islamists try deal to lift ban

Turkey's Islamists have offered to ease their opposition to conservative Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz's coalition in an effort to water down a court ban on the Islam-based Welfare Party, government MPs said yesterday.

"They said they would change the tactics they have used until now. That is, they won't block parliament and present motion after motion to impede the passage of laws," said Ugur Aksos, a senior member of Mr Yilmaz's Motherland Party.

He added that the Islamist leader, Necmettin Erbakan, made the offer to Mr Yilmaz at a meeting on Friday just before the constitutional court banned Welfare on charges of threatening secularism.

The Turkish press says Mr Erbakan wants the government, a minority coalition of left and right, to help Welfare avoid the worst of the ban in return for the Islamists calling a parliamentary truce.

The court also threw Mr Erbakan out of parliament and banned him from political leadership for five years, though the ruling does not come into force for at least two weeks.

Italian MP escapes arrest

MPs in Italy yesterday voted against allowing the arrest of a former defence minister and top aide of former prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi. Milan prosecutors suspect Cesare Previti of corrupting Rome judges with a slush fund allegedly set up by Mr Berlusconi. Five months ago, they asked for Mr Previti's arrest because they insisted there was a danger he could tamper with evidence. But the Chamber of Deputies refused to lift Mr Previti's immunity against arrest. Earlier this month the chamber's justice commission recommended voting against lifting immunity of the deputy, from Mr Berlusconi's conservative Forza Italia party.

— AP, Rome

Jospin rebuffs jobless

The embattled French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, vowed yesterday there would be no U-turn in his Socialist-led government's policies on employment, Europe and public spending. Mr Jospin, facing a protest by the unemployed which began five weeks ago, said the government would not raise taxes or inflate the budget deficit to meet demands for an increase in welfare benefits.

— Reuters, Paris

Killer attracts Disney

Disney film producers has bought the rights to do a remake of the Polish movie *Killer*, which topped Poland's box office charts at the end of last year. Janusz Majewski, who wrote and directed *Killer*, said Disney is paying \$600,000 (£375,000) to do the English-language remake.

Killer, which translates to killer in English, was made for only 1.8 million zloty (£312,500). It has sold more than 1.6 million tickets in Poland and earned 13.4 million zloty since its release in October. The film is a comedy about a kind-hearted taxi driver who is mistaken for a serial murderer.

— AP, Warsaw

Netanyahu gets a frosty reception

President Bill Clinton met the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, in the White House yesterday. But no one seriously believes the meeting will yield any substantial progress towards peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

"Benjamin Netanyahu is the Ronald Reagan of Israel," enthused Mr Falwell, an enemy of President Clinton's so vicious that he accuses him of having dealt in narcotics and of having been involved in the death of Vincent Foster, the former White House official who committed suicide. "I love democracy, and Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East," Mr Falwell declared.

The atmospherics surrounding the White House meeting served only to illustrate just how far apart the US and Israeli visions for peace in the Middle East remain. President Clinton and Mr Netanyahu did not dine together, they did not hold a joint press conference, they did not even appear in public together.

"We're treating him like the president of Bulgaria," a Clinton administration official told the *Washington Post*. "Actually," the official added, referring to a scheduled Bulgarian visit to Washington next month, "I think Clinton will go jogging with the president of Bulgaria, so that's not fair."

As for the Israeli leader, his main objective in visiting Washington appears to have been to shore up right-wing support for his policies in the US. On arriving in Washington on Monday night he headed straight for

a rally of right-wing Christians presided over by Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority. Mr Netanyahu arrived to a thunderous ovation at the hotel where the rally was held.

Mr Falwell, an enemy of President Clinton's so vicious that he accuses him of having dealt in narcotics and of having been involved in the death of Vincent Foster, the former White House official who committed suicide. "I love democracy, and Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East," Mr Falwell declared.

Mr Netanyahu, pointedly referring to his critics in the Clinton camp, told the Falwell faithful that the Jewish people were being "vilified and scorned and misrepresented". "There is no peace or weakness," he added, to resounding applause.

The weakness to which he referred would involve succumbing to White House wishes and abiding by the land-for-peace formula which was the basis of the Israeli-Palestinian accord signed in Oslo in 1993.

— John Carlson, Washington

Havel takes third crown

Prague's "philosopher king" bounced back from cancer, scandal and political intrigue to claim his crown for the third time - but not without a few alarms.

Václav Havel, spiritual leader of the Velvet Revolution of 1989, was due to be acclaimed as president last night by the Czech parliament, but he failed to win an absolute majority in the first round of voting. He was 10 votes short in the lower house and two in the Senate, but the two other candidates did not gain enough support to advance to a second round, leaving him to march on unchallenged.

— Imre Karacs, Bonn

Name put to 'Unknown Soldier'

The Pentagon is preparing to disinter the corpse of the Vietnam War's Unknown Soldier and subject it to DNA identity tests after it emerged that the soldier might not be unknown at all.

According to a report on CBS television, the body appears to belong to Lieutenant Michael Blassie, a highly decorated young Air Force pilot whose aircraft was shot down over Vietnam in May 1972.

CBS said the airman's skeletal remains were found on October that same year along with an identity card bearing Lt Blassie's name. But the Pentagon told his relatives at the end of 1972 that he was missing, presumed dead. Suspicion arises that the United States military

establishment has been involved in a bizarre cover-up.

For, unlike previous wars, Vietnam yielded few bodies that could not be identified, to bury at Arlington National Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknowns. Eventually one was found and on Memorial Day 1984 President Ronald Reagan presided over a ceremony where, choked with emotion, he asked: "As a child, did he play on some street in a great American city? ... Did he marry? Did he have children?"

The answers, if the Blassie family is proved right, are, in order: Yes, St Louis; no; and no. Should tests prove Lt Blassie is the unknown soldier, his family say they want a headstone with his name put over his grave.

— John Carlson, Washington

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15/FASHION

What Lagerfeld knows and Galliano knows not

'Galliano the glorious?' 'Galliano the genius?' No. Let's try 'John the deluded'. British hosannas for his Paris couture show beggar belief. But by all means find two cheers for Alexander McQueen. Then forget little England and do homage to Karl Lagerfeld, the old master who, writes Tomsin Blanchard, made a couture collection as a couture collection should be. Photographs by Andrew Thomas.

If a modern composer insisted upon harking back to the manuscripts of Beethoven or Mozart, the music fraternity would laugh them out of the concert hall. But when a modern fashion designer remakes the clothes of the Twenties masters of couture, Lanvin, Erté and Paul Poiret, he is given a standing ovation.

On Monday afternoon in the ornate salons of the grand Opera house, John Galliano gilded the works of the great designers of the pre-First World War period. The collection was "a poetic tribute to the Marquise Casati ... an Italian lady from the beginning of this century".

According to the programme notes, the Marquise "transformed her life into an oriental tale, in a Venetian palace surrounded by monkeys". She was a friend of Leon Bakst, the artist who designed costumes for the Ballets Russes. The entire collection was in homage to a woman whose life was one long orientalist indulgence, dancing tangos and collecting costumes.

Had this show been transported back in time 90 years, the Marquise would no doubt have ordered every sumptuous piece, from the fabulous orange bead-encrusted cocoon opera coat to the Joan of Arc silver liquid chain-mail dress and the sheer tulle suit embroidered with jahlias. As it was, she had to make do with the efforts of Paul Poiret. If she had still been alive today, she would have said, "been there, seen that, worn it," and would be off shopping at Hussein Chalayan or Martin Margiela.

However, the great and the good of the fashion world paid homage to the court of Galliano as they waited for the show to commence, entertained by tango dancers who twisted each other around the opera house. If Galliano had been alive in the Twenties, he would undoubtedly have been the star designer of costumes for the Ballets Russes. But that time has past. These days the modern day equivalent of Diaghilev would be commissioning the *avant-garde* Japanese label Comme des Garçons to design their costumes.

No matter how hard he tries to recreate it, women today – even the ones with offshore bank accounts and private jets – do not live in period costume drama.

The news on Alexander McQueen is rather better. He has stopped wreaking havoc at Givenchy. His new collection went back to his roots of tailoring and innovative cutting. Even Hubert de Givenchy might have eaten his words if he had seen the collection, after describing McQueen's work for the house as "a disaster" last week. His opulent collection shared the week's Twenties orientalist theme, but with a sense of reality and modernity too.

Whatever you may think of these two English boys their arrival in the rarefied world of haute couture has had the effect of putting a rocket under everybody else, none more so than Karl Lagerfeld, who has a wisdom and touch that they have yet to acquire.

Who would not want to spend their millions on the collection. Lagerfeld presented yesterday morning in the mirrored showrooms of the Chanel headquarters at Rue Cambon? It was simply sublime.

Where Galliano is literal, Lagerfeld, with the assistance of Galliano's ex-muse and collaborator, Amanda Harlech, is



JOHN GALLIANO FOR CHRISTIAN DIOR



ALEXANDER MCQUEEN FOR GIVENCHY



KARL LAGERFELD FOR CHANEL



VALENTINO



JOSEPHUS THIMISTER

subtle and delicate. Both touched on the Twenties tango theme, but Chanel's black net tiered tango dress with pink silk flowers hand-sewn on the skirts was light and elegant.

The weight of the fabrics – heavy satin folded easily into flippy skirts, boucle wool made into a closely tailored suit, or a beaded argyle pattern skirt – and the proportions of the clothes give the collection a true couture feel.

That every piece of clothing was touched by human hands is evident from the tiny cross-stitching sewn up the seams and along the cuffs and edges of a pistachio green wool suit, to the scalpel-fine pleats on a chiffon skirt.

Inside and out, these clothes are perfection, every attention paid to the tiniest detail in the best tradition of haute couture.

Couture is not all about fantasy and romance. A new name appeared on the schedule this season, that of the former Balenciaga designer, Josephus Thimister, who has managed to pass the strict criteria of the Chambre Syndicale, haute couture's governing body, to show his first couture collection. It

was an attempt to bring an old world up to date with a series of minimal, simple evening dresses in luxurious fabrics. Although it was a brave effort, it was almost too pared down, and easy to be valid as clothes worthy of having made to fit every millimetre of your body.

On Sunday night, Valentino, the Roman courrier, showed technically perfect suits and evening dresses that are both modern and sellable. A bright scarlet pin-tucked wool suit, a plain silk crepe suit with tiny pin-tucked pleats around the edges of the jacket and cuffs, or a white silk crystal-strewn cocktail dress all have a valid market place.

If the sole purpose of a couture show is to sell perfume and be a glorified advertisement then the entire concept of haute couture is indeed a wonderfully poetic and fantastic sham.

However, while Chanel, Valentino and Yves Saint Laurent are still servicing a real market in the highest level of luxury clothing, haute couture and more importantly, the craftspeople, seamstresses and tailors who create it all from beginning to end by hand, deserve to thrive.

rite the
year for
year olds?

INDEPENDENT
Story of the Year 6
Andrew
Suzanne Moore,
Tony Jordan,
Terry Eagleton, Peter
Hitchens, Anne Finnis
David Fickling



Truly, this was the son of man. But which one? Peter Hilton as Jesus in 'The Mysteries' Mark I, left; (with Johnny Lodi as a Roman soldier), and in 'The Mysteries' Mark II, far left (with Joe Mydell as Satan)

Photographs:
Ivan Kynd (left),
John Nathan
(below)

Peter
Ivan Kynd, born Berlin 1936. Private Secretary to Schenck 1944-45. Stage Director, Sted Orkest 1944-45. Manager, Holland 1945-53. Artistic Director, Sted International 1953-78. Hon CBE. Actor, Teatro alla Scala 1957-78. Director, Royal Opera Orchestra 1978. Jean-Pierre Martzat 1978-87, married 1981. Second wife, Sophie, second son, married 1984. Son died 1996. 16 January 1998.

How the Mysteries lost God and found religion, man

When you've axed Satan and exonerated the Jews for Jesus' death, how much of a mystery have you really got left? Paul Taylor investigates the RSC's latest reworking of the medieval biblical dramas.

In the beginning there were *The Mysteries* in Stratford. And Edward Kemp, the dramaturge,

and Katie Mitchell, the director, beheld them and saw that they were good – but not good enough. If God were ever to revise His creation (in our dreams, mate) this would be the closest parallel to the arduous process that has gone on between the long opening performance of this project in March 1997 in Stratford and the premiere, tonight in The Pit at the Barbican, of the new, heavily emended London version. One might just hope, though, that God, should He ever take such a corrective course, would

be a shade more decisive. Both before and after Stratford, the Mitchell/Kemp *Mysteries* have generated a certain amount of crude publicity, of the kind – only more so – than any modern staging of these medieval plays tends to attract. For example, every four years, like the World Cup and the Olympics, the York Cycle of Mystery Plays comes round, presented by a large community of amateurs – the approximate equivalent of the craft guilds which originally mounted these biblical dramas. And,

every four years, there's some slightly cocked-up news angle on the casting of the Devil. In 1988, the talking point was that Jesus was played by a professional Hindu star actor, brought across from India. In 1992, the chattering classes got their chasubles in a twist over the assigning of the role of God the Father to a matronly, very middle-class white woman. It was an ambiguous blow, that, for positive discrimination. In terms of sexual equality, getting a turn to play the vengeful being who creates a species

and then helpfully equips it with the freedom to be damned for all eternity must be judged as a case of having to take the rough with the smooth.

The Mitchell/Kemp *Mysteries* found themselves fodder for the news pages on account of their towering political correctness. Not so much BC as PC, the original version was ecumenical to a fault, or to the point of it being a bit of a mystery why the project was called *The Mysteries*.

Unprepared to let mankind off the hook by dumping sin and evil on to a scapegoat Satan figure, *The Mysteries* got rid of the Devil, and by a complementary manoeuvre, removed all references to Jews, so that responsibility for killing Christ could not be pinned on any one race or religious sect.

Edward Kemp gave a hostage to fortune (or made a smart marketing move) in aluding to the Gospels themselves as "fraught with ideologically unsavoury baggage". Indeed, from a publicity department's point of view, Kemp is dream material. His father is the Bishop of Chichester; his grandfather was a bishop. Enough to make the minds of cheap journalists foam with trumped-up Oedipal scenarios.

Facially and conversationally, Kemp too seems to have the bishop gene: all gas and T-shirt. If you were doing an amateur production of *Racing Demon*, the David Hare C of E play, you'd beg him to join in. He describes himself as "a devout atheist", has a tendency to say "Yeah, absolutely" to most of your remarks in that eager-to-share Anglican manner, and he now finds himself once again the focus of controversy. "A bishop's son," reported the Religion Correspondent of *The Times*, "has written a 20th-century version of the medieval mystery plays in which Jesus is a homeless beggar, St Peter is a foul-mouthed mugger, Mary Magdalene is a prostitute and St Matthew is a commodities broker who lives in Kensington." Items have appeared in organs which, when they coyly print "F-word", always mean "fuck" rather than "faith", which is what the show is actually preoccupied with. But there's a thoughtful article by David Nathan in the *Jewish Chronicle*, which, while clearly relieved that the anti-Semitism is gone, asks a shrewd basic question of this re-angled material: "How do we understand the consequences of belief if the causes are expunged?"

First, though, I want to know why the piece has been so radically re-written. It emerges that precisely what I took to be the source of the production's power when I first saw it in Stratford turned out, in the course of the run there, to be a liability. Katie Mitchell's productions – her RSC staging of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*

in particular – have always been informed by an almost religious intensity, and ensemble work of the utmost dedication. At the press showing, this bore, I felt, particularly beautiful fruit in the production's depiction of Jesus' ministry. The disciples in *The Mysteries* Mark I were involved in and with Christ with such a silent, rapt yet realistic attentiveness that the show, in one sense, didn't need an audience. Paradoxically, that pulled you in, when it worked. The trouble was, it often didn't.

More than most theatrical endeavours, *The Mysteries* (medieval and modern) take on the form of a chain for a slave", their homeless beggar Jesus comes over as a cross between Sherlock Holmes or maybe Cracker (he can deduct a lot, spookily, from the things he notices about people) and a rather irritating social worker. He is both God and man, but, according to these plays, the god-in-man in all people is what we should be striving to locate and to act upon. "For me," argues Kemp, "it's important that the play ends with, on the one hand, Mary Magdalene saying that we can all be God and make something that is good and Peter going off and killing himself."

To reverse Hannah Arendt's phrase, it's the banality of goodness that can impress you, if your sense of the evil that opposes it gets muffled. Goodness, like happiness, writes white. Or does it? I tell Kemp that the most Christ-like person I have heard of lately is the doctor who is experimenting on himself in the search for a vaccine against Aids. That really is taking on the suffering of the world in a way selfless to the point of suicide. Kemp tells me of the film *Jesus of Montreal*, where, in a rather similar medical-metaphor way, the Jesus-figure's death gives life through organ donation. Wouldn't schizophrenia, I argue, have been an interesting way of tackling the tussle of identity in this penniless vagrant Jesus, except that here he would slowly awaken to the intense sanity of proven knowledge that he is God?

At times, this long, often fascinating and risky work seems to want to turn into a meditation on the changing artistic representations there have been of the Biblical story, and to contain within itself the evolution to a religion of humanity. One would love to see a review of it, written by Milton's Satan or the Pontius Pilate of *The Master and Margarita* (who, with adjustments, features in the piece). The project also furnishes, as Kemp points out, an example of how, in this country – as opposed to, say, Russia or the Paris of Peter Brook – you have to start marketing something before you know what it is you'll end up with. That they are still working out what it is, they have got could communicate itself to an audience as excitement or as self-bewilderment. The charge that they are patronising the past, in the cuts and in the desire to offend nobody, can be avoided if the production feels like a healing enrichment of its own present – as it certainly did at that press showing in Stratford. *The Mysteries*, though, is now more than ever a misnomer, and that's the Gospel truth.

The Mysteries (five and a half hours, incl two intervals) opens at 5pm tonight in The Pit, Barbican Centre, London EC2. Booking: 0171-638 8891

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ularly with the new "Jesus, Our Contemporary" slant, is the ruthless egotism of the single artistic vision. For example, Dennis Potter's Jesus in *Son of Man* has more than a smack of Dennis Potter in his scathing, pain-wracked, anti-establishment manner. A long roster of writers, from Gore Vidal to Jim Crace, have recently re-made the Bible story in their own creative image and likeness. Or people have done bits of it. Harrison Birtwistle, it's rumoured, is setting the Last Supper to music. Neil Bartlett, in *The Seven Sacraments of Nicolas Poussin*, inserted himself – a gay, late-20th-century man – into the very non-gay sacramental scheme of things and threw up fascinating anomalies and conjunctions and instances of inclusion and exclusion.

First, though, I want to know why the piece has been so radically re-written. It emerges that precisely what I took to be the source of the production's power when I first saw it in Stratford turned out, in the course of the run there, to be a liability. Katie Mitchell's productions – her RSC staging of Euripides' *Phoenician Women*

and the likehood that the likelihood that the new version will possess the creative identity on stage that is oddly lacking in it on the page. Very

17/OBITUARIES

Peter Diamond



Peter Diamond, arts administrator; born Berlin 8 June 1913; Private Secretary to Artur Schnabel 1934-39; Assistant Director, Netherlands Opera 1946-48; General Manager, Holland Festival 1948-49; Artistic Adviser 1965-73; Director, Edinburgh International Festival 1965-78; Hon CBE 1972; Artistic Adviser, Orchestre de Paris 1976-98; Artistic Adviser, Teatro alla Scala, Milan 1977-78; Director and General Manager, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra 1978-81; Director, Paris Mozart Festival 1981-87; married 1948 Maria Curcio (marriage dissolved 1971), second Sylvia Rosenberg (one son; marriage dissolved 1979); died Amsterdam 16 January 1998.

Peter Diamond was one of the 20th century's most effective art patrons and the personification of the Edinburgh Festival in the years 1965 to 1978, when he directed it with a far-sighted, wide-ranging view of what the world of culture had to offer Edinburgh.

An Austrian born and educated in Berlin, where he studied law, he was obliged to flee from Nazi Germany in the early 1930s and found work in Amsterdam with Artur Schnabel, then one of the world's most famous pianists. During the Second World War he survived a Dutch concentration camp, and went on to play his role as an arts administrator in Amsterdam.

Like the Edinburgh Festi-

val's first director, Sir Rudolf Bing, Diamond was imbued with the spirit of those who wished to see post-war Europe revitalised by its cultural heritage. Without his firm and fearless control of the festival, it might not have survived the long period of testing it endured from a hostile tabloid press, and insensitive bureaucracy including a festival council dominated by town councillors with little experience of the arts.

Diamond's predecessor, the Earl of Harewood, had given the festival a sense of new beginnings, but the four years of his directorship, 1961-65, had been fraught with trials and tribulations. When Diamond appeared there was an atmosphere of doubt and despondency among those who wished to see the festival accept the challenge of the Sixties.

The festival's committee had chosen Diamond as the most experienced arts administrator in Europe. He inherited the festival in its 18th year, still a fledgling institution with woefully inadequate finances, and he left it a robust 31-year-old, an inspiration to his successor John Drummond.

"The Inside Story of 50 Edinburgh Festivals" is the subtitle of a book, *Banquo on Thursdays*, published last summer to coincide with the festival's 50th anniversary. Its author, Ian Crawford, was the festival's first ever publicity director, appointed when Diamond became dissatisfied with the Scottish Tourist Board's publicity methods. Crawford's nine chapters each bear the names of the festival's directors and their periods of office. Diamond alone merits two chapters. The first is entitled "Against the Odds, Fiscal and Philistine"; the second, charting the festival's development from 1973 when Jack Kain, Edinburgh's first Labour Lord Provost, was in office, "The Phantom of the Opera House". Kain supported the dream of an Edinburgh opera

house, but it was not to be; despite this handicap, Diamond gave the festival what many consider its golden years of opera.

In 1972 he managed to present the Deutsche Oper Am Rhein with an impossibly complex production of Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*, on the small-scale stage of the King's Theatre. Five years later, again at the King's, there was the highly successful production of Bizet's *Carmen*, starring Teresa Berganza and Plácido Domingo, conducted by a youthful Claudio Abbado.

Diamond had supported wholeheartedly the creator of Scottish Opera, Sir Alex Gibson's vision of a Scottish opera dimension in the festival programme and set them well on their way with Scottish Opera's production of Stravinsky's *Rake's Progress* in 1967. He also put his faith in Arthur Oldham to establish and conduct the Edinburgh Festival Chorus.

He was always ready to support gifted musicians at the beginning of their careers. At the Holland Festival he presented Kathleen Ferrier and Benjamin Britten before they had established themselves in Britain. He was also resolute in promoting the work of avant-garde composers, particularly Pierre Boulez, and even Maurizio Kagel, but had to be more subtle in Edinburgh.

Taciturn and uncommunicative in his public persona, Diamond inspired love and loyalty among his friends. He was well served by his staff, and in particular by Alex Schouvaloff as his deputy director and Schouvaloff's successor, Bill Thomley. Both were given a free hand to deal with the theatre programme – I associate the Diamond years with the unforgettable productions of Japanese Noh theatre, *Orlando Furioso* and Tadeusz Kantor's Circo Theatre productions of Stanislaw Witkiewicz's master works *The Water Hen* and *Lovelies and Dowdies*, never before seen in Britain.

Among many highlights, Frank Dunlop's Pop Theatre productions gave new meaning to Shakespeare, while the Prospect Theatre's *Richard II* launched the career of Ian McKellen. The Romanian Buandra Theatre production of *Leonce and Lena* introduced the young Ion Cotruș, now the Romanian Minister of Culture. Modern dance was encouraged although there was no proper dance theatre. Pina Bausch and Nederlands Dans helped establish the festival as a venue for experimental dance.

Diamond was also the first director to take the contemporary visual arts seriously, and took the risk of asking me to organise exhibitions of contemporary live artists. In 1967 I found myself presenting an exhibition of 100 contemporary British painters. In 1968 it was 30 Canadian artists. Over the years up to 1978, I was responsible for a programme which introduced the avant-garde artists of Romania, Poland, Germany, Austria and France. The German exhibition in 1970 was the first to show Josef Beuys's work to the English-speaking world.

In a conversation with Ian Crawford at the 40th Edinburgh Festival, Diamond was asked to express his views on the festival's future. He expressed his worries that the festival had done more and more to attract an undiscriminating public, as if it was quantity that mattered. "I think this is sheer nonsense," he said. "What I consider as the Edinburgh Festival is addressed to a limited audience. Without knowledge about the contents of the festival you cannot expect to attract a mass audience."

These wise words suggest that it is not enough to invest in art festivals without first investing in art education. In an age when marketing forces are driving the arts, never has the spirit of Peter Diamond been more needed.

– Richard Demarco



The most English of actors: Villiers as Captain Hook with Gayle Hunnicutt in the title-role in rehearsals for *Peter Pan*, 1979
Photograph: Hulton Getty

James Villiers

James Michael Hyde Villiers, actor; born London 29 September 1933; married 1966 Patricia Donovan (marriage dissolved 1984); 1994 Lucy Jex; died Arundel, West Sussex 18 January 1998.

begging Colchester Repertory to take him on in any capacity whatever and being heartbroken when they refused) and at prep school he gained a reputation as their best actor.

After training at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, where he formed lifelong friendships with fellow students and cricket enthusiasts Peter O'Toole and Ronald Fraser, he made his stage debut at the Summer Theatre in Frinton as William Blor in Agatha Christie's thriller *Ten Little Niggers* (1953), and the following year made his first West End appearance with the Shakespeare Memorial Company in *Toad of Toad Hall*.

His film career flourished in the Sixties when he was a particular favourite of the director Joseph Losey, while his work in the theatre spans over 40 years. On television he achieved particular success and recognition with his portrayal of Charles II (to whom he bore a strong resemblance) in the series *The First Churchill*.

Born in London in 1933, Villiers (pronounced Villers) was proud of his aristocratic lineage (his family tree goes back to the Duke of Rockingham). He was brought up in Shropshire and later at Ormeley Lodge in Richmond, more recently the home of James Goldsmith, and educated at Wellington College. He had, however, become stagestruck as a child (his brother John recalls Villiers as a boy

– Tom Vallance

he was the friend who ambiguously gives John Fraser a kiss in *Seth Holt's The Nanny* (1965) Villiers and Wendy Craig were the parents of a disturbed child left in the care of Bette Davis at her most neurotic, and in George Sidney's *Half a Sixpence* (1968) he was the snobbish father of the society girl Kips (Tommie Steele) hopes to marry.

Other films included *Nothing But the Best* (1963), *Blood from the Mummy's Tomb* (1971), *For Your Eyes Only* (1981) and *Let Him Have It* (1991). His many television appearances included *Pigmalian* (as Professor Higgins), *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Fortunes of War* and most recently *Dance to the Music of Time*. Stage successes include the thriller *Write Me a Murder* (1962), a superbly droll and highly acclaimed performance as Victor Prynne in John Gielgud's 1972 revival of Coward's *Private Lives*, starring Maggie Smith and Robert Stephens, a forceful Earl of Warwick in John Clements' 1973 production of *Saint Joan*, and prominent roles in such classics as Pirandello's *Henry IV* (with Rex Harrison), *The Way of the World* and *The Last of Mrs Cheyney*.

A few years ago he created the role of Lord Thurloe in Nicholas Hytner's staging for the National Theatre of Alan Bennett's *The Madness of George III*, and most recently was featured as Mr Brownlow in the hit revival of *Oliver!* at the London Palladium.

Having maintained a loyal home-state following, she returned to Louisiana and continued to gig regularly. Last year however, she headed back to Nashville and, knowing that she needed to re-establish herself in the city, started demoing songs for the Herb Alpert-owned publishing company Almo-Irving. She also toured the UK, headlining the annual Good 'n' Country Festival at Wrotham Heath, Kent. I had the good fortune to see her perform there and was impressed, as was the crowd, by an assured and confident set; even a pair of disruptive power cuts seemed barely to faze her and, to wild applause, she sang the final part of the Patsy Cline classic "Crazy" a cappella.

Annie Comeaux was due to return to Britain, in the company of the Scottish singer Janet Somers, later this year.

– Paul Wadey

Ivan Chambers

Ivan Chambers, bookseller; born Philippopolis, Bulgaria 20 January 1902; OBE 1970; married 1943 Kathleen Pilsbury (one daughter); died Axminster, Devon 1 January 1998.

In 1925 Ivan Chambers started work at W.J. Bryce's bookshop in Holborn, London; the shop soon moved to Museum Street, in a building belonging to Stanley Unwin, and Chambers stayed there, after the shop was bought by Bowes and Bowes, until his retirement as managing director in 1971. As a director of "the original pedigree bookshop" he was earning £500 p.a. and was refused a rise, being told, "Your reward will be in the hereafter, my dear boy." He stayed, despite having no religious convictions.

Chambers was born in 1902, in Bulgaria, where his father was working on the financial concerns of a silk-spinning factory. He returned to England as a small child and was educated at St George's Roman Catholic School, Walthamstow, although

he had been baptised into the Orthodox Church.

When he was five he caught polio and had to spend much of his childhood on his back during which time he developed a passion for literature; he was left with a withered right arm and a left arm which he could not lift properly. "I worked on half an arm." He left school aged 14 and "thereafter I was an autodidact". His career started in a Dutch concentration camp, and went on to play his role as an arts administrator in Amsterdam.

He had a particular love of Scandinavia and the Orkneys and their literature, and had a long correspondence with the poet George Mackay Brown. Chambers spent many holidays cycling in northern Europe with his father until he married Kathleen Pilsbury, a painter, in 1943. He said of his marriage, "I was a late developer", but his withered arm had made him shy. When Bryce made him become an associate bookseller he began to be more confident and to find his place as a public speaker.

The Second World War was

a difficult time at Bryce's: the shop had supplied schools with their books and prizes but at the outbreak of war in September 1939, many cancelled their orders and publishers were reluctant to take returns. Chambers often worked seven days a week supplying prisoner-of-war camps with hand-picked packages of books sent through the British Red Cross, as well as supplying Winston Churchill.

From 1937 until his death Chambers was a member of the



Chambers: 'personal bookselling'

graver and writer, 80; Mr Norman Willis, former General Secretary, TUC, 65.

Anniversaries

Births: Thomas Jonathan ("Stoney") Jackson, Confederate general, 1824; Christian Dior, haute couturier, 1905; Benny Hill (Alfred Haworth Hill), comedian, 1924; Deanna Durbin, actress, 1921; and, as Peter Pan, Peter Pan, the star of the National Ballet of Canada, 1954. Deaths: Sir Ernest Rutherford, New Zealand physicist, 1937; Sir Alexander Fleming, discoverer of penicillin, 1955; Sir John Betjeman, poet, 1984; Sir David Frost, television host, 1987; Sir Edward Heath, former prime minister, 1992; Sir Roy Strong, former director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, 1993; Sir Michael Gambon, actor, 1994; Sir John Gielgud, 1997.

Birthdays

Mr Adrian Beahm, ambassador to Mexico; Dr Alan Borg, Director, Victoria and Albert Museum, 56; Dr John Burnett, former Principal, Edinburgh University, 76; Dr David Carey, Joint Registrar, Faculty Office, Archbishop of Canterbury, 81; Lord Clegg, 85; Mr John Denison, former general manager, Royal Festival Hall, 87; Mr Plácido Domingo, operatic tenor, 57; Mr George Foukakis, MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for International Development, 56; Dr John Hayes, former Director, National Portrait Gallery, 69; Mr Kenneth Maginnis MP, 60; Sir George Humphrey Middleton, former diplomat, 88; Mr Jack Nicklaus, golfer, 55; Miss Seona Reid, Director, Scottish Arts Council, 48; Mr Paul Scofield, actor, 76; Mr Martin Shaw, actor, 53; Mr Aubrey Singer, former Deputy Director-General, BBC, 71; Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Trowbridge, 75; Mr Laurence Whistler, glass engraver, 80.

Lectures

National Gallery: Mari Griffith, "Dress and Undress (II): Palma Vecchio, *A Blonde Woman*", 1pm; Victoria and Albert Museum: Miranda Neave, "Early 18th-century English Glass", 2.30pm; Tate Gallery: David Carr Smith, "Constable and 19th-century Academic Landscape: art or illusion?", 1pm.

LAW REPORT: 21 JANUARY 1998

Court would not enforce claim for restitution

On an application for judicial review the court would not make an order to enforce a civil claim for restitution to a third party of money paid in consequence of an unlawful committal order.

Regina v. Barnet Magistrates' Court, ex parte Captain Coveney, Bench Committal Court, 14 Justice Hall, 18 December 1997.

The Divisional Court quashed a suspended committal order whereby the applicant was committed to prison for nine months for failure to pay an order for £30,000 costs, and granted a declaration that the sum of £30,000 had been transferred to the bank account of the clerk to the Barnet justices on the instructions of the applicant's mother in consequence of an unlawful committal order.

The justices found that the applicant had negligently failed to pay the costs order, and made a suspended committal order of nine months' imprisonment to take effect if the whole amount was not paid by 9 December 1996. On 9 December the justices issued the committal warrant.

The justices found that the applicant had negligently failed to pay the costs order, and made a suspended committal order of nine months' imprisonment to take effect if the whole amount was not paid by 9 December 1996. On 9 December the justices issued the committal warrant.

The applicant had deposited £30,000 of her own money with the applicant's so-

licitors with instructions that it should only be paid over to the court if it became absolutely necessary, and in particular to avoid her son's going to prison. The money was telegraphically transferred to the magistrates' court and the applicant, who had been taken to the cells, was released. He sought orders of *citationem* to quash the committal order and *mandamus* directing the clerk to the justices to repay £30,000 plus interest to his mother.

Peter McGrail (Rowe and Cohen, Manchester) for the applicant; Kate Anastasis (Crown Prosecution Service) for the respondent.

Mr Justice Garland said that the justices could only have concluded that the applicant would be able to pay £30,000 by resorting to the discretionary trust, and that was an error. They should in the circum-

stances only have taken account of such sums as he had actually received. On that ground alone the committal order should never have been made. There was authority for the proposition that it was unlawful for justices to impose a fine which a defendant had no realistic prospect of paying, a *forfaiture* if it was imposed in the hope or expectation that it would be paid by a third party. There was no distinction to be drawn between a fine and an order for costs. The order committing the applicant to prison had been made on an incorrect basis in law; the sum to be paid was plainly beyond the applicant's means; and if there was an expectation that it would be paid by a third party, that too was unlawful. For those reasons the order would be quashed.

With regard to the repayment of the £30,000, there was

no authority for the use of *manumis* to enforce a civil duty to make restitution to a third party, even though the duty arose from the quashing of an order. Money paid by mistake as a result of an act or perceived threat fell to be recovered in accordance with the principles of restitution or *quasi-contract*. Unfortunately, the law lacked clarity and although a claim by the applicant's mother to recover her money was meritorious, it would be both novel and not free from difficulty.

Even if the court felt able to do so it should not give effect to a private claim for restitution, however meritorious, when the cause of action was other than obvious and certain. It would, however, grant a declaration that the money had been transferred in consequence of an unlawful order.

– Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

Amie Comeaux

Amie Comeaux, singer; born Baton Rouge, Louisiana 4 December 1976; died near Lacombe, Louisiana 21 December 1997.

Amie Comeaux's death in a car crash at the age of just 21 robs the world of country music of a promising talent. A petite blonde, vocally reminiscent of older and earlier stars like Lorrie Morgan and Patsy Cline, she had lately begun to re-establish her career after a disappointing association with a major Nashville record label and was rapidly gaining a fan base in Europe.

Born in Brusly, Louisiana, a suburb of Baton Rouge close to the Mississippi river, she began performing seriously from the age of eight, after an aunt who worked in the jewellery department of a Baton Rouge J.C. Penney store used her niece's singing to attract customers. Appearances at J.C. Penney in-store fashion shows and at shopping malls followed, and she became a regular fixture, performing the national anthem at New Orleans Saints football games.

The Nashville producer Harold Shedd saw her in a local production of *Annie* when she was 11 and, impressed and believing that she could enjoy dual careers as both a singer and an actress, signed her to a development deal. Six years later, when he became head of Polydor-Nashville, he brought her on board.

The resulting album, *Moving On* (1994), was produced by Shedd and David Briggs, and featured leading Music City session musicians, including Hargus "Pig" Robbins, Bruce Bouton and Rob Hajaco. It spawned three singles: the upbeat title song "Moving Out", "Blue" (not the Bill Mack song of that name) and "Who's She to You", the video for which gained airplay on Country Music Television Europe and introduced her to country music fans in Britain. None proved the breakthrough hit she needed and, although her version of the Pee Wee King/Redd Stewart standard "You Belong To Me" in particular suggested real interpretive depth, she quietly dropped by a label that seemed uncertain what to do with her.

Having maintained a loyal home-state following, she returned to Louisiana and continued to gig regularly. Last year however, she headed back to Nashville and, knowing that she needed to re-establish herself in the city, started demoing songs for the Herb Alpert-owned publishing company Almo-Irving. She also toured the UK, headlining the annual Good 'n' Country Festival at Wrotham

A spelling lesson for undergraduates: our words are our bond



EDITOR: ANDREW MARR.
DEPUTY EDITOR: COLIN HUGHES.
ADDRESS: 1 CANADA SQUARE,
CANARY WHARF,
LONDON E14 5DL
TELEPHONE: 0171 293 2000
OR 0171 345 2000
FAX: 0171 293 2435
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Access to abortion

Sir: Contrary to the assertion given in your editorial of 20 January, the Abortion Act of 1967 has not ensured that abortion is generally available to women. Whether a woman can obtain an early abortion frequently depends on her doctor's view and where she lives.

We receive calls every day from distressed women whose doctors have refused to refer them for an abortion on the basis of the doctor's personal interpretation of the law or moral objection to abortion.

It is also apparent from government figures that it is far more difficult to get an abortion in some parts of the country than others. The inequality ranges between Northumberland, where nine out of ten abortions are paid for by the NHS, to North-west Lancashire, where the figure is fewer than three in ten.

Frank Dobson's statement that it should be made easier to obtain an early abortion is strongly supported by the Family Planning Association. We wish to see the law changed to allow abortion on request in the first three months of pregnancy. Women will continue to need abortions, so it is essential to ensure that these can take place as early as possible.

ANNE WEYMAN
Chief Executive
Family Planning Association
London N1

Sir: Frank Dobson told BBC television news on 19 January that he believes in easier access to earlier abortions because early abortions are "less upsetting mentally".

Is this what we have come to? Right is something we feel good about, and wrong is something we feel upset about?

Making abortions easier does not make abortion right. What we need to consider is not whether abortion is emotionally acceptable, but whether it is morally acceptable.

HUGH J THOMSON
Consultant Surgeon
Birmingham

Sir: Under clause 2 of the 1967 Abortion Act a woman has to persuade her doctor that continuation of the pregnancy would be of significant risk to her physical or mental health. It is not the doctor's role to enforce personal moral inclinations on the patient, but simply to satisfy himself that sufficient

Number 14 down in yesterday's crossword was "prophesy for heretic with ecstasy" (13). Solve it, and then try to say correct spelling does not matter. It's not "ecstasy" that is the test. Getting its three tricky consonants right is not ultimately a matter of life and death. Ecstasy is only the current settled spelling of a word that has historically bounced around. If all those who ingest the fashionable drug were to decide to spell it once again with an "x", doubtless time the convention would change and nobody would be the worse for it. One of the delights of English is its malleability. "Prophesy" however is different matter. For a start, the crossword clue does not work unless you know that prophesy is a verb – "prophesy" (the noun) would have given a different solution. Here is a prime instance where conservatism is the friend of precision, where linguistic laxity leads to loss of meaning. And to those who failed to complete the crossword, the answer is the verb "prognosticate".

Unlike the Germans, who have precipitated a constitutional crisis over spelling reforms, or the French, to whom neologism is like alien invasion, we in Britain take these things informally. Even the recent proposal by John Honey to set up a committee of sages to oversee changes in language use sounds authoritarian. That suspicion of top-down cultural ordinances is healthy. But freedom of speech is not the same as orthographic anarchy. New evidence that the nation's ostensibly best and brightest undergraduates cannot spell is alarming.

Bernard Richards, formerly of Brasenose College, has written a piece for *Oxford Magazine* comparing the spelling of Eng Lit students over the past decade. It is not a rigorous study; he cannot tell, for example, whether the poor performance of his former students in their first-year exams reflects how they were when they did their A-levels, or shows the baleful influence of 12 months' dreaming

neath those spires. However, it is a study which chimes. Young people often write to *The Independent*, for jobs, work experience placements, advice – all of which we are happy to supply up to the limits of our ability. But when they write to "The Independent", which a depressingly large number do, our patience wears thin.

Good spelling is a badge of attentiveness. Young people who write job applications spattered with misspellings are undermining their prospects, not because they fail to convey their attributes and aspirations (clearly most misspellings nevertheless convey their meaning); no, they damage their prospects because the employer reads the letter and concludes that this applicant does not think it matters to take care about getting things right. And their conclusion is correct. When Ruud Gullit said Chelsea played "sloppily" at Everton on Saturday, the expression of his disappointment was precise; his players did not concentrate, did not commit.

So with sloppy spellers. How many Blues fans would write to their player-manager without according him the respect of spelling his name right? Bad spellers betray an unattractive quality of absence of mind ... that's absence, not absence or absence, as the young Oxonians apparently write. Of course, if a young literary type were to write *absinthe* of mind, we would applaud their inventiveness – realising that the play on words only works if it is built on a platform of consensus. Bad spellers are saying to their readers they do not care enough to get it right.

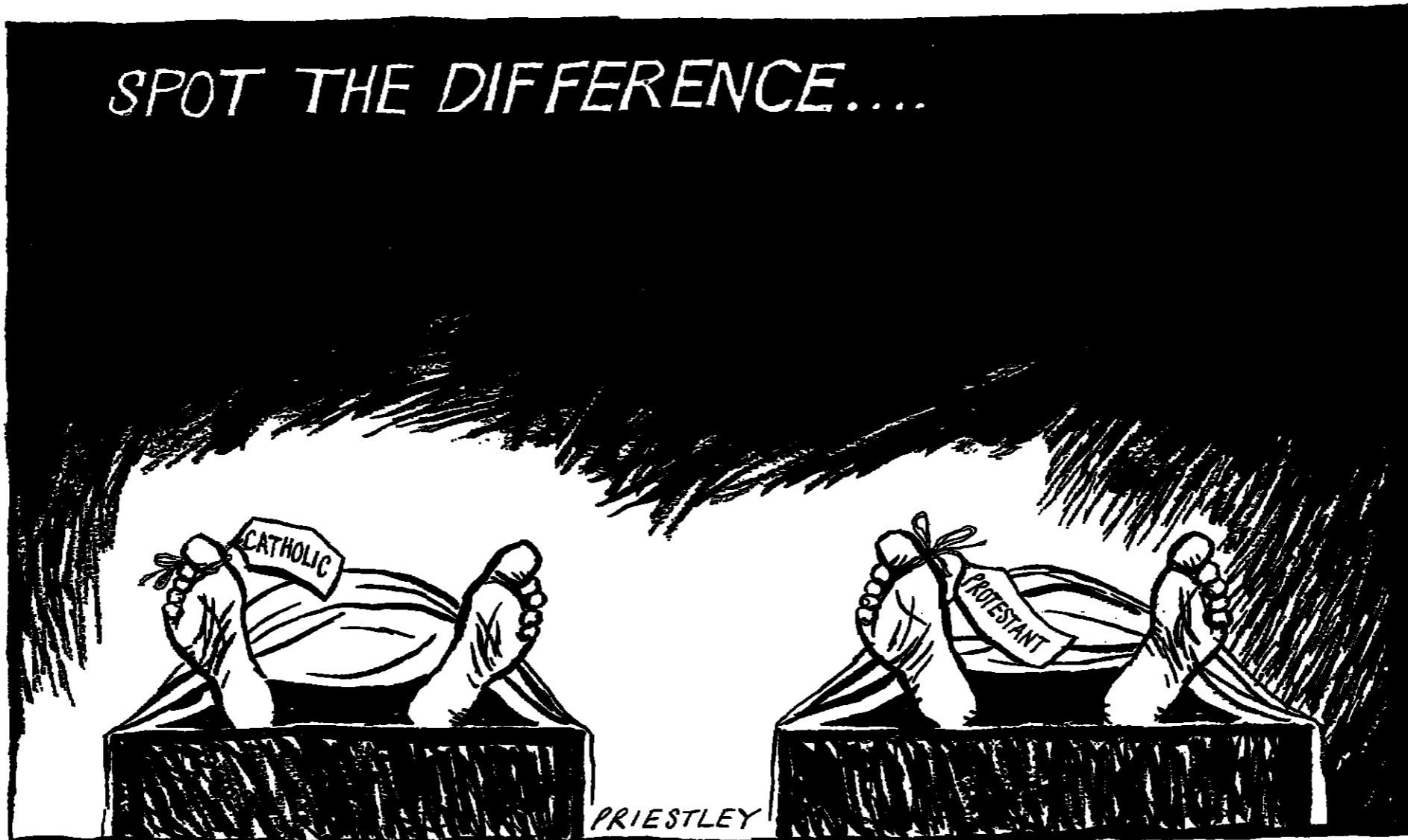
At one time that attitude was greeted as evidence of free spirit, potential creativity. Why bother about the rules as long as expression flows free – we both abut the roots at aw! But the rules are not a straitjacket (not straightjacket, says the *Oxford Dictionary for Writers and Editors*). Regularity in spelling is the basis of effective communication. Only if we possess language mutually are we guaranteed

the knowledge of what someone is on about. Just as there is no one to *épater* without a bourgeoisie, so without a common language there can be no perception of originality. We need to know that accommodation has two es and two ms, not because we couldn't otherwise recognise a des res, but because spelling it that way guarantees that we all know what the discourse is about and so can register changes in use and definition.

Of course all change is not decline. "Dumbing down" is an attractive thesis for older folk and has been since the beginning of time. Yet during the past three decades large mistakes do appear to have been made in teaching practice, and in examination procedure. For Oxford does to have allowed Eng Lit students to proceed with such egregiously bad spelling says something uncompromising about their devotion to duty. That is uncompromising, not uncompromising – the difference is worth preserving.

LETTERS

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE...



maturity of thought has brought about the decision. The moral responsibility of the decision lies with the mother.

Sadly some of the medical profession feel that their own moral conviction should be enforced on the patients and refuse access to this treatment. Others feel that the NHS should not carry the cost of this service, but the majority of us

do allow the mother to own her decision and retain some dignity. Hence, in the majority of cases, abortion is already available at request.

Most women who have abortions are in their 30s and 40s. They know their own minds and can assess better than anyone else whether continuing a pregnancy is sensible or not. Why then treat them like children and demand they get permission from doctors? We don't need permission from doctors to have other operations we need.

ELLIE LEE
Canterbury

Sir: Presumably Frank Dobson is "huffing and puffing" about abortion (leader, 20 January) because he perceives a problem with existing abortion

law from the starting point of women's health needs. I agree with him. Abortion should not be seen as a moral question. Policy should simply be designed to allow for services that best meet women's needs when they are faced with unwanted pregnancy. What else makes sense?

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For the mother as well, going through with the pregnancy and having the baby adopted will be less traumatic in the long run than an abortion, however early it may be, and however coldly clinical it may seem.

P K RAY
London W3

Selfish parkers

Sir: In the correspondence on the danger of bikes on pavements the matter of cars on pavements has not been addressed.

Every street suffers to some degree from cars parking on the pavement. This is dangerous, illegal and selfish. We cannot let car users get away with letting us believe that they are not also a danger on the pavements. Stopping bikes and cars using pavements would make them a far safer place for those who should be using them – pedestrians.

GARETH DURLING
Otley, West Yorkshire

rum butter, come to that. Nor galore!" cried Lord Nugget. "We have tried everything! We have invented a rum butter-based liqueur copied from Bailey's Irish Cream! We tried to get climbers in the Lake District to rub rum butter in their leather boots! We urged their wives to rub it into their bodies! We brought out a rum butter alcopop! We persuaded the Body Shop to do tests on a rum butter cream and a rum butter shampoo! I even tried the rum butter shampoo myself! And what happened?"

"All your hair fell out!" cried the heckler.

Everyone laughed. Lord Nugget was as near bald as makes no difference. Lord Nugget himself smiled.

"You may laugh," he cried,

"but this is a serious situation. Every year in the first few months we build up huge reserves of rum butter, and sell very little of it till the climbing season starts again. What we need to do is find another use for it! Does anyone here have any ideas?"

There was a silence, broken by a voice from the crowd.

"Yes! I have an idea!"

All eyes turned. The speaker was a handsome young man with a rakish smile.

"What's your name, young man?" asked Lord Nugget sternly.

"Toby Skillet, sir. The Skilletts of Blundell have been making rum butter since 1793. William Wordsworth himself would never go climbing

Amazing airport

Sir: Martin Plimmer (ISM, 17 January) criticises Heathrow as a "Lego heap of gloomy halls and temporary buildings" and accuses the airport of "doing nothing to amaze its customers".

It is easy to sit here in 1998 and say that Heathrow was poorly planned 50 years ago, much harder to have anticipated the growth in air travel and planned to meet that growth with additional facilities.

Yet by and large this is what has been achieved at Heathrow.

With investment in new facilities at Heathrow now running at more than £1m a day, wonder there is evidence of construction taking place. We

have not yet found a way to refurbish our terminals invisibly,

but we have found a way to do this vital work and still keep the world's busiest international airport operating smoothly.

ROGER CATO
Managing Director
BAE Heathrow

without a jar of our stuff in his vallet's pocket."

"Then come up here and tell everyone your idea."

The young man lightly leapt up on the stage, took the microphone from Lord Nugget, and faced the crowd, his eyes flashing.

"Ladies, gentlemen and comrades of the rum butter industry! There is only one thing we need to do! And that is to get rum butter involved in cooking!"

There was a silence. Lord Nugget stirred.

"How do you mean, boy?"

"What we've got to do is get the same thing happening to rum butter as happened to cranberries. Cranberries were heavily featured as a cooking

ingredient by Delia Smith one year, and suddenly you couldn't find cranberries in the shops. Cranberry people made a fortune. Why can't the same thing happen to rum butter?"

"Because nobody has ever recommended anyone to use rum butter in cooking!" shouted another voice.

"Because people say that rum butter is fattening!"

"Because people are afraid of alcohol, and people are afraid of butter, but people are twice as afraid of both of them combined!" shouted another voice.

"Because cranberries are

ever so 1990s and good for you, but a goody-goody like Delia Smith would never touch rum butter!"

"You are all cowards!"

First car victim

Sir: Next month sees the centenary of Britain's first fatal car crash. On 12 February 1898 Henry Lindfield, a Brighton businessman, smashed his speeding car into a tree near Purley, Surrey.

Russell Hill Road is still a dangerous, winding road. It now bears the signs "care, speed humps" and leads into the busy red route at Purley Corner.

A simple prayer vigil will be held at the site at midday on the centenary to remember all who have died on our roads over the past century, estimated at half a million people. A century after Lindfield's death, we have still not learnt how to tame speeding drivers.

A PORTER
London W2

Big as hailstones

Sir: Commenting on the association between half and the Selby tornado, William Hartston (Weather, 16 January) expresses surprise that measurement of hailstone size is disappointingly vague. He says that "the meteorological world is clearly in great need of an official scale for hailstone measurement".

Meteorologists already use millimetres and centimetres. Phrases such as "the size of golf balls" are handy for anyone who happens to be caught in a hailstorm without a ruler, and, of course, for the news media looking for a dramatic headline.

Moreover, a hailstorm intensity scale (from "pea" to "coconut") has been in use since 1986, when it was introduced by the Tornado and Storm Research Organisation, based at Oxford Brookes University.

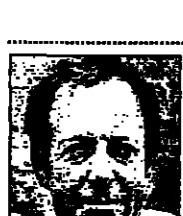
DAVID PEDGLEY
Crowthorne, Oxfordshire

Nothing like a dome

Sir: Given the lack of public support for Peter Mandelson's millennium project, I would like to propose an alternative use for the Greenwich site. The millennium dome should be flipped through 180 degrees and renamed the millennium wob. The millennium could then be marked by the largest stir-fry in history, and the resulting food distributed to London's homeless, ensuring widespread popularity for the project.

TOM PERKIN
Canterbury

As the rum butterers simmered, all became clear. Delia would save them



MILES
KINGTON

"There are hard months ahead for the producers of rum butter!" cried the speaker. "Every year is the same! Every year after Christmas the consumption of rum butter goes down! And yet we are never prepared for it! Never! Why not?"

There was a roar of agreement.

It was the annual extraordinary general meeting at Rum Butter House, the HQ of the producers of that strangely British foodstuff known as rum butter. Every year we buy vast quantities of the stuff to put on our Christmas puddings, and the trade booms. Every year, in January, we stop buying it, and the trade slumps. No other country has a slump in rum butter. Well, no other country has

rum butter, come to that. Nor galore!" cried Lord Nugget. "We have tried everything! We have invented a rum butter-based liqueur copied from Bailey's Irish Cream! We tried to get climbers in the Lake District to rub rum butter in their leather boots! We urged their wives to rub it into their bodies! We brought out a rum butter alcopop! We persuaded the Body Shop to do tests on a rum butter cream and a rum butter shampoo! I even tried the rum butter shampoo myself! And what happened?"

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SmithKline Beecham set for record £77bn merger with US pharmaceuticals giant

SmithKline Beecham, the UK pharmaceutical giant, yesterday revealed it was in merger talks with American Home Products, in a move which could lead to the creation of a £77bn healthcare and drugs giant. Andrew Yates in London and David Usborne in New York contemplate the prospect of the biggest deal ever seen in corporate history.

SmithKline Beecham, the UK pharmaceutical giant, yesterday revealed it was in merger talks with American Home Products (AHP) would create a powerhouse in the drugs industry. With annual turnover of more than £16bn, including almost £9bn of prescription drug sales, the combined group would become the biggest pharmaceuticals group in the world ahead of Novartis of Switzerland, Merck of the US and Glaxo Wellcome of the UK.

The City was betting last night that a merger was likely to be sealed within the next few weeks. "They have been talking to each other for some time and a deal looks near," said one source "close to the talks".

Rumours of a bid on Wall Street have seen SmithKline's shares rise more than 80p since Friday but, after early gains again yesterday, they closed down 3p at 740p. But in New York, news of the talks sent the value of AHP soaring. By lunchtime on Wall Street, the shares were trading at \$90, up almost \$10 from the opening bell. The combined group would now be worth about £77bn.

The merger talks were prompted by the huge cost savings that would result from a partnership. Analysts believe SmithKline and AHP could slash costs by £1.5bn by the year 2000 by using each other's sales and distribution networks.

The two groups could also increase expenditure earmarked for researching and developing drugs to more than £1.5bn a year, one of the biggest budgets in the industry and well ahead of the likes of Glaxo Wellcome and Novartis.

One analyst said: "This will put the combined group in the top flight in terms of expenditure on new drugs which they were not really before. That is vital for their future."

Shares in drug companies around the world soared in anticipation of further consolidation in the industry. Glaxo Wellcome shares rose 30p to 166p and the bid spotlight once again fell on Zeneca whose price jumped 60p to 2357p.

Robin Gilbert, drugs analyst at Panmure Gordon, said: "There has been a lapse in mergers ... but now it's party time again. Everyone will be

looking at their options again."

A spate of corporate activity throughout the industry in the mid-1990s culminated in the formation of giant drugs group such as Glaxo Wellcome. However since Novartis came into being with the merger of Swiss groups Sandoz and Ciba-Geigy in 1996 there has been a dearth of big deals.

"As each merger takes place,

it just ups the stakes for the next one," commented one US analyst. "A lot of people behind closed doors today will be figuring out what they will need to do if this goes through. There will be a lot of discussion of new mergers in that industry."

"This is an ongoing scenario," said Avend Desai, whose firm Orbimed Advisor, tracks the pharmaceutical industry worldwide. He pointed out that even as the world's largest player, a combined SmithKline and AHP would still have slightly less than 6 per cent of global market share. "That is a lot less than you see the leaders capturing in other industries".

Analysts agree, that with stock market prices of drug's groups escalating, agreed mergers are now deemed much more likely than hostile takeover bids.

If SmithKline and AHP merge, the new group is likely to be listed in the US. "With most of the business in North America it would make sense to relocate over there," said one industry source.

SmithKline makes some of the best known healthcare products in the world including Beecham's cold remedies, Panadol pain killers Aquaphor toothpaste and Nicorette patches for smokers determined to kick the habit. The group's best selling prescription drugs include Serotex, the antidepressant which is sold as Paxil in the US and is the group's answer to Prozac, and antibiotic Augmentin.

With a market value of around £36bn, AHP is the third largest US pharmaceuticals group behind Merck and Bristol Myers Squibb. Worldwide, it is already sixth in the pharmaceutical rankings. It is also the supplier of some of the best-known – and most lucrative – products in the American market. These range from over-the-counter consumer medicines such as the pain-killer Advil and Preparation H (a haemorrhoids cream) to prescription drugs like the hormone replacement which is sold as Premarin in the US and is the group's answer to Prozac, and antibiotic Augmentin.

SmithKline has slipped down the pharmaceutical industry's pecking order in recent years and is currently only the ninth largest drugs group in the world and second biggest in the UK behind Glaxo Wellcome.

A merger would solve the management succession problems at AHP. Chairman John Stafford had been seriously ill and Fred Hassan, the director who was favourite to replace him, left the group last year to become chief executive at rival Pharmacia & Upjohn.

However, there are several clouds on AHP's horizon that may be weakening its hand in the talks with SmithKline. Among these is the threat of competition for the first time to its highly lucrative Premarin drug – a name derived from its primary ingredient, pregnant mare's urine – which it first patented in 1942.

Premarin is used by some 8 million American women, mostly



SmithKline Beecham

SmithKline Beecham's history can be traced back to 1849 when Thomas Beecham opened the world's first drug making factory. The group soon became known for its laxative pills and later cold remedies. As Beecham expanded it added a string of products from Lucozade, the health drinks, to Brylcreem, a hair cream made famous by legendary cricketer Dennis Compton. The foundations for the present day drugs giant were formed when Beecham completed its own Anglo-American merger, teaming up with SmithKline Beckman in 1989. The US group had been transformed in the 1970s after it discovered Tagamet, a drug used to treat ulcers. However poor results from its research and development program and acquisitions saw it fall prey to Beecham. Since then SmithKline Beecham has pulled off a number of large acquisitions which have made it one of the biggest pharmaceutical companies in the world, including the \$2.9bn purchase of Sterling Winthrop's drug business front Kodak in 1995.

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filed by some of AHP's own shareholders who have claimed that executives at the company knew of the difficulties months before they were made public and that they sold some of their own shares in the company in anticipation of the storm that was about to break.

Perhaps worse for AHP, however, is the gathering onslaught of class-action lawsuits filed against it and some of its executives stemming from its decision, under intense government pressure, to withdraw from sale two leading dieting drugs, Redux and Pondimin.

The two drugs manufactured by Wyeth-Ayerst, were commonly used in the now discredited diet cocktail known as Fen-Phen. They were withdrawn after research demonstrated that they could cause potentially fatal complications including an unusual hardening of the heart valves and pulmonary hypertension.

Among the lawsuits is one

filed by some of AHP's own shareholders who have claimed that executives at the company knew of the difficulties months before they were made public and that they sold some of their own shares in the company in anticipation of the storm that was about to break.

This month also saw the start of a first trial considering another lawsuit over Norplant, a contraceptive device that looks like matchsticks that are placed under a woman's skin in the arm. Plaintiffs argue that AHP concealed the extent of negative side-effects of the drug, including personality changes among those who take Norplant.

Even if a deal with AHP fails to materialise, few experts believe that SmithKline will remain independent for long. "If SmithKline don't do a deal with AHP then they will probably do it with somebody else," said an analyst.

– Outlook, page 21

John Denham, the DSS pensions minister, announced cuts to pension rebates, the subsidies given to people who give up Serps, the State earnings related pensions scheme, by at least 11 per cent.

The decision will anger a pensions industry already smarting from the July decision to abolish the dividend tax credit paid to pension schemes, which was expected to lower pensions by at least 10 per cent.

Bill Birmingham, benefits officer at the National Association of Pension Funds, said: "This will hit members, who will effectively now have a lower pension. A drop of 0.9 per cent will mean 9

per cent less income in retirement."

The cuts come as pension experts because they are accompanied by a sharp hike in subsidies for personal pensions, repeatedly criticised by the Government as expensive.

Personal pensions will receive a rise in rebate of 0.4 points to 3.8 per cent – giving personal pension holders 7.2 per cent more than members of group schemes. The cost to the Treasury is approximately £160m a year, based on DSS figures.

Members of final salary schemes will receive the same rebate as before, despite criticism following the Budget that this was too little.

Meanwhile, the Government is expected to announce plans within weeks that Lloyd's of London will be regulated in future by the new Financial Services Act due to be published this summer. "We assume there will be a ministerial announcement before the end of the month," said David Gittings, director of the Lloyd's regulatory division.

A damaging reference in the Board's annual report says: "It is noticeable that many of the offences arose as a result of a lack of understanding of accepted business practice and the requirements of civil law."

– Terry Macalister

www.bloomberg.com

Ranking	Company	Country	Pharma sales (\$m)
1	SmithKline/AHP	UK/US	14,168*
2	Merck	US	13,295
3	Novartis	Swiss	9,858
4	Bristol Myers Squibb	US	8,702
5	Hoechst Marion Rousset	Germany	8,734
6	Pfizer	US	8,188
7	Johnson & Johnson	US	7,188
8	Roche	Swiss	6,688
9	Lilly	US	6,427
10	Abbott	US	6,307

Source: Scrip Magazine, Jan 1998
Top 10 pharmaceutical companies in prescription sales for 1996/97.

* pro forma sales

American Home Products

Sales	£8.6bn
Pre-tax profits	£1.72bn
Market value	£36bn
Workforce	60,000
Top products	Advil (painkillers), Premarin (hormone replacement therapy), Preparation H (haemorrhoid cream)
Location	New Jersey, USA
Chairman	Joha Staford

SmithKline Beecham

Sales	£7.95bn
Pre-tax profits	£1.54bn
Market value	£24bn
Workforce	52,900
Top products	Panadol painkiller, Ribena, Lucozade, Beecham's powders, Aquafresh toothpaste, Nicorette anti-smoking patches, Serotex (Paxil in the US) antidepressant, Augmentin antibiotic, Tums antacid.
Location	Brentford, Middlesex
Chief executive	Jan Leschly

Leschly: tough competitor at work and play

If Jan Leschly succeeds in a bid to create the world's largest healthcare group, his commercial prowess could finally eclipse his other great successes: on the tennis courts.

The 57-year-old chief executive of SmithKline Beecham was ranked tenth in the world at tennis 30 years ago. He played 16 consecutive Wimbledon tournaments and was a regular choice for his native Denmark in the Davis Cup.

Mr Leschly works at business as he played tennis: to win. Outspoken and fiercely competitive, he has been deeply influenced by the US where he now officially lives with his family.

Although educated with a pharmacy degree and MBA from university in Copenhagen, Mr Leschly joined the US-based pharmaceutical group, Squibb Corporation, where he quickly climbed the corporate ladder.

In 1990, Mr Leschly took his American-style openness and keen sense of humour to SB as chairman of the group's worldwide pharmaceutical business. His enormous reserves of energy were used by the then group chief executive, Bob Bauman, to help weld together the still disparate pieces of the recently merged SmithKline and Beecham companies.

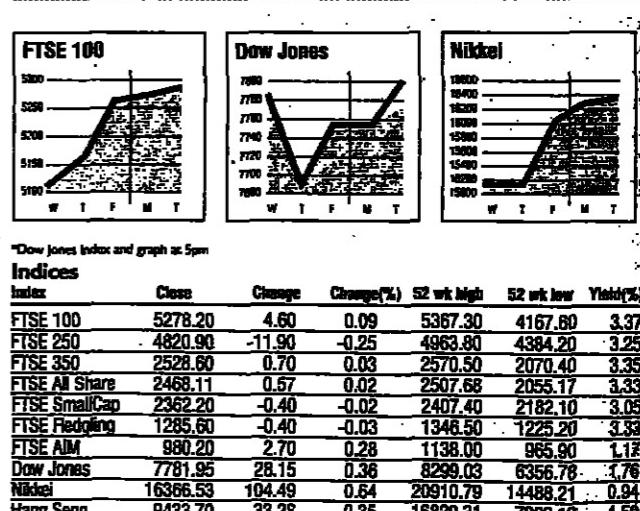
Mr Leschly succeeded Mr Bauman in April 1994 and immediately embarked on a whirlwind of activity. In a single year he completed either the sale or purchase of assets worth \$10bn (£6.1bn).

Now based in Philadelphia and also on the board of American Express, Mr Leschly has attracted little but praise for his strong corporate leadership. The only real concern has surrounded the size of his pay packet: he earned more than £2m in 1996 which included a £1.2m bonus.

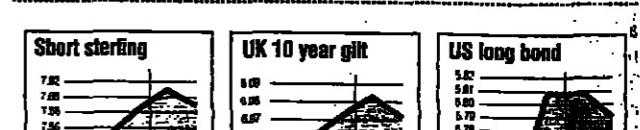
Co-operative in management style, Mr Leschly nevertheless likes to lead from the front. As one colleague remarked: "It probably comes from being the nephew of two Danish generals."

– Terry Macalister

STOCK MARKETS



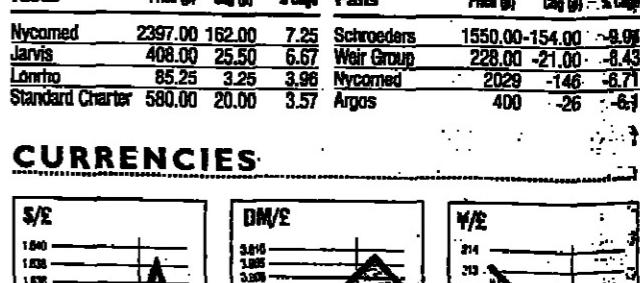
INTEREST RATES



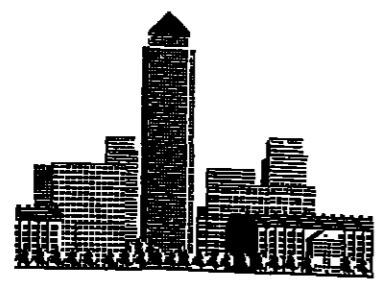
MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change	Falls	Price (p)	Change (p)	% Change
Nycomed	2397.00	162.00	7.25	Schrodens	1550.00	-154.00	-9.04
Jarvis	408.00	25.50	6.67	W.H. Group	228.00	-21.00	-8.43
Lorinto	85.25	3.25	3.98	Nycomed	2020.00	-146.00	-6.71
Standard Charter	580.00	20.00	3.57	Argos	400.00	-26.00	-6.47

CURRENCIES



21/BUSINESS

Leschly on to a winner in going for an encore
OUTLOOK
 ON SMITHKLINE
 BEECHAM'S
 PROSPECTIVE DEAL.
THE BANK OF
 ENGLAND
 SYMPOSIUM ON
 EMU AND CABLE
 & WIRELESS IN
 HONG KONG

Bigger and more ambitious still grow the consolidating mergers of industry and finance. After months of fevered stock market speculation, Jan Leschly, chief executive of SmithKline Beecham, finally admitted publicly for the first time yesterday to plans for the big daddy of them all – a prospective merger with American Home Products to form a pharmaceuticals and health care products goliath with a combined market capitalisation of £77bn. Just to put this in perspective, that's getting on for double the annual GDP of Ireland.

This is the world's most ambitious merger to date and it would be silly to try and baffle it in any way. All the same, by the end of the year we are going to have seen a lot more of these things, both domestic and like this one cross border in nature. It is all too likely that soon it will be eclipsed by something even bigger. The backdrop to this growing wave of mergers, not just in pharmaceuticals but across industries, sectors and frontiers, is well rehearsed. Globalisation, rapid technological change and a relentless pressure on managements for enhanced returns, is forcing the pace as never before.

Even so, it is somehow appropriate that it should be Mr Leschly who is out of the hatch first this year. He was not the architect of the original merger between Beecham and SmithKline, but he is credited with being the one who made it work, adding hugely to shareholder value in the process. Now this tough talking Dane is intent on performing an encore. He knows how to do these things and he knows how much value they can create.

The idea that there is no room any

longer for the middle-ranked player, strongly locked into a particular domestic market, has become a bit of a business cliché. Companies have to be either the big global operator, with the distribution, spending and marketing clout to reach out to the mass markets of the world, or they must position themselves as small niche players, sniping at the soft underbelly of the international monopolists. Perhaps unfortunately, it is nonetheless true. Mr Leschly is aiming to put SmithKline Beecham firmly in the first category.

As for Britain, it would not be capable of joining in the first wave even if its political masters wanted to. Virtually no thought has yet been given or preparation made across vast swathes of British industry and commerce to introduction of the euro. Fortunately this is not the case in the City, which, judging by a symposium yesterday organised by the Bank of England for City practitioners, is relatively advanced in its preparations. The general consensus was that the City is well placed to maintain its status as Europe's leading financial centre even if Britain stays out for some length of time. And if all comes unstuck, then the City will doubly clean up. Don't just love being in control.

City wins both ways with EMU

A year's long time which it comes to European Monetary Union. This last year there was still great angst among the leading exponents of the single currency, there will be no fudging of the entry conditions. Theo Waigel, the German finance minister would say at every available opportunity. This led everyone to think there was little possibility of Spain and Italy becoming founding members of the euro.

With the euro less than a year away, nobody bothers too much about that sort of thing any longer. The Euro now seems to be open to all in the first wave, apart from maybe Greece, which really would be a fudge too far. This makes the single currency both a more credible thing, in the sense that it promises to take in most of Europe immediately, and a more dangerous one, in the sense that it will as a result also be more unstable and open to attack.

First the bull case. The terms of the compensation deal are at least as good and probably better than the market had been expecting. In addition to a cash payment of £530m, Hongkong Telecom ceases to make royalty payments of £42m a year for the privilege of owning the monopoly. Moreover, it is allowed to begin ratcheting up charges for line rentals having had to provide them up until now at below cost with a subsidy from international call revenues. Finally, C&W preserves its majority shareholding in Hongkong Telecom with the clear understanding that it will not cede control unless it gets something concrete back from Peking, in the shape of real access to the Chinese mainland.

Now the bear case. Hongkong is already a relatively mature and saturated market. Moreover, competition in the domestic market already means that no-one pays for a local call; now the same market forces are about to bear down on Hongkong Telecom's international business. But the biggest question marks concern when, how and indeed whether C&W will ever get a meaningful deal with the Chinese. Peking remains paranoid about granting access to China's telephone system, regarding it less as a commercial opportunity and more as a threat to national security.

Hongkong Telecom waxes lyrical about exploring new investment opportunities in the colony, mainland China and Asia Pacific. But to rest of the world, it looks to be relaxing its grip on the region and forcing its majority shareholder to beat a retreat at the same time.

No hurdles to stop us joining the single currency, Brown tells the City

Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, sent a clear signal yesterday that there would be no practical obstacles to eventual UK membership of the single European currency. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, listened to the Chancellor address a City symposium at the Bank of England.



Gordon Brown: "Clear and unambiguous economic benefits to the country will be the test."

The Chancellor announced that the next Finance Bill would contain measures dealing with technical tax problems identified by business. The Inland Revenue issued a statement setting out detailed proposals for change.

In addition the Department of Trade and Industry is considering amending the Companies Act to make it easier for companies to re-denominate their shares in Euros.

Mr Brown said the Government would use the UK's European presidency to launch an information campaign on the single currency, financed by the EU. He said: "We are the first British government to declare for the principle of monetary union."

He added: "Clear and unambiguous economic benefits to the country will be the test." The decision would be determined by what was good for jobs and prosperity, not by dogma, he told the audience of City executives.

"If anyone says they are prepared then they are lying," commented one senior investment banker.

Recs face £50m competition delay fine

John Battle, the Energy Minister, was under increasing pressure last night to impose stiffer financial penalties on the electricity industry after several suppliers warned that even the five-month delay in launching domestic competition might not be enough. Michael Harrison reports.

Professor Stephen Littlechild, the electricity regulator, yesterday bowed to the inevitable and confirmed that the opening up of the domestic electricity market would be delayed from this April to September – at the earliest. Customers in some parts of the country will not be free to choose their supplier until June, 1999.

The Chancellor was speaking at the Bank of England's second annual symposium on the City's preparations for EMU. The Bank is keen to ensure that Britain's non-participation in the first wave will not harm the City.

John Townsend, head of a new Euro preparation division within the Bank, said: "Provided we complete the technical preparations, the City will thrive on the Euro, even on the outside."

Speaking on the eve of a joint Confederation of British Industry and British Chambers of Commerce EMU conference, Adair Turner,

struts from 1 January 1999 – just 240 working days away. David Clementi, Bank of England Deputy Governor, will next month lead a "roadshow" selling London's merits as a centre for Euro banking to financial centres such as New York and Tokyo.

EMU is very much flavour of the week. Today also sees the launch of a broader initiative by employers' organisations to prepare British business for the start of the single currency.

Mr George said a head from a major country like France could be perceived as trying to exert national influence.

At least two Recs cast doubt on the ability of the industry to meet even a September deadline. One said: "Even the revised timetable is shaky. It relies on there being no further changes to the specification but the PA Consulting report says there is a significant risk that further changes will be needed."

Another Rec said: "Achieving the new delayed deadlines will require a lot of dialogue and a lot of central control and there is no leeway built in." Centrica, the trading arm of British Gas will also attend the meeting, called on Mr Battle to force the electricity suppliers to pay compensation of £20 a head – the sum it calculates customers could have saved if the competitive market had gone ahead on schedule.

The two energy regulators, Offer and Ofgas, are also preparing to issue new guidelines clamping down on "dual fuel" offers from the Recs whereby customers can get cheaper gas bills if they agree to continue buying electricity from their local supplier.

Offer and Ofgas have been investigating whether this amounts to predatory pricing and whether it distorts the market by making it less likely that customers will switch suppliers when competition starts. So far only one other rival company has applied for a licence to enter the domestic electricity market in addition to Centrica, which already faces competition for domestic gas customers.

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out the possibility of the market opening up in some areas of the country before September if testing went well.

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Under the revised timetable competition will start in the Eastern, Seaboard, Scottish Power, Hydro-Electric, Midlands and Northern will open in October and the remaining areas in December. In each region the opening of the market will be phased over six months.

Trading losses at UBS rumoured to be more than £800m

UBS, the Swiss banking giant that is merging with rival SBC, may have lost more than £800m from its trading operations, according to industry sources.

Last November, after intense market speculation following the departure of four high-profile traders, UBS admitted it had lost £90m on derivatives in the first half of the year.

But losses for the full year are rumoured to be far larger.

"The rumours are extremely persistent," said one Zurich-based source, who estimated that the losses could be as high as 2 billion Swiss francs

(£820m). Another said: "I have heard figures as high as a billion pounds being tossed around. Although I think it is unlikely, I would not be surprised if the losses ran into hundreds of millions of pounds."

UBS traders are understood to have been caught out by volatility in the emerging markets as well as by changes to UK tax law.

A UBS spokesperson would not comment on trading losses yesterday, but said that UBS would next month publish accounts for the full financial year. It had been rumoured that

UBS would combine its accounts with those of SBC, a move which would mask the size of trading losses.

The growing rumours surrounding trading losses will depress further staff morale, dealt yet another blow yesterday by news that UBS managers had lost out to rivals at SBC in the race for top jobs in the new bank.

SBC and UBS have provided staff with details of around 80 senior management posts in the new bank. Just a quarter of the jobs announced yesterday are to go to UBS staff.

"I was staggered," said one UBS insider. "It's a very small number."

Morale at UBS was yesterday said to be "incredibly low". By contrast, SBC staff were said to be "reassured" that they are in the driving seat".

Details of redundancies – which are expected to total over 3,000 in the City alone – are unlikely to be made public until the merger gains shareholder approval in early February. However, UBS is expected to bear the brunt of the cuts.

– Lea Paterson

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THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY PETER THAL LARSEN

Squeeze is on for Somerfield

It has been a strange year for Somerfield. Following its difficult flotation in August 1996 when the issue price had to be cut twice, the group's shares spent most of last year trading virtually in line with the market. This was in spite of the fact that it floated on a forward earnings multiple of five and with a yield of 10 per cent. Then in the last month the shares have soared from around 190p to a high of 251 last week.

This was either bid speculation – with the group being identified as a potential merger target in a sector keen on consolidation – or a catch-up process as Somerfield shares had missed out on much of the upgrading in supermarket ratings since the summer.

Whatever prompted the buying spree, it certainly cannot be trading. Somerfield did well to report a 12 per cent increase in underlying profits to £56.9m in the six months to 8 November. But the problem is that the growth all seems to be coming from widening margins. Like-for-like sales growth in the period was just 0.3 per cent and current trading is not much better at 0.6 per cent.

Given that the company said in the summer that its target was sales growth above the industry average, this is an under-achievement. Tesco, for example, reported like-for-like growth of 6.5 per cent on Monday against an industry average of 3.3 per cent. With sales virtually stagnant, Somerfield is having to rely on squeezing suppliers to drive margins. They rose from 3.4 per cent to 3.8 per cent on the year.

Management is talking about improving sales with better product availability, refit programmes and an improved product mix. With costs on the up and the tax charge rising, however, this may not be enough. There is some scope to improve the store portfolio with refits but the large sales increases have already been achieved.

A merger is always a possibility though it is difficult to see any of the big UK supermarkets paying 300p a share for a company that was offered to them for 160p by Kleinwort Benson just before the flotation.

Somerfield: At a glance

Market value: £729m, share price 241.5p (+4p)

Trading record	1995	1996	1997	96/7	97/8
Turnover (£bn)	3.1	3.1	3.2	1.71	1.72
Pre-tax profits (£m)	(33.3)	92.0	105.4	54.6	60.9
Earnings per share (p)	–	29.3	29.4	14.9	17.8
Dividends per share (p)	–	–	10.2	3.4	3.8

Like for like sales growth % (by format)	Share price Pence (since flotation)
1996/97	260
1997/98	240
Somerfield	220
Gateway	200
Food Giant	180
Group	160

Source: Datastream

Assuming full-year profits of £115m, the shares, up 4p to 241.5p yesterday, trade on a forward p/e ratio of 8 and yield almost 5 per cent. Still a substantial discount to the sector, but given the recent strong run, it may be time to lock in some profits.

Pru could be set for a struggle

Reading the financial pages, you might have got the impression that the Prudential's name was mud with its shareholders and customers alike. The country's biggest life insurer was publicly rebuked twice last year for its treatment of the pensions mis-selling fiasco.

In the UK, meanwhile, all the bad publicity is unlikely to help this year, although the inclusion of last year's Scottish Amicable acquisition will provide a new source of revenues. And the Asian turmoil is bound to dent the Pru's sales in the Far East, though the group claims it is too early to tell.

All the more surprising then, to see that both customers and shareholders

So the Pru faces a number of challenges in 1998. Even though it is one of the country's strongest financial institutions, the shares will struggle to justify their current exalted rating. Investors who hold the shares should consider locking in some profits. Otherwise, steer clear for now.

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Tough first year for Ushers

Shareholders were no doubt drowning their sorrows last night after the latest figures from Ushers of Trowbridge. In its first year as a public company, the Wiltshire-based regional brewer unveiled pre-tax profits of £11.3m, up from £10.6m, but well down on the original estimates when it floated in March last year. Not that the gloom was unexpected. Management had warned in November that things had got tough.

Still, those who took a punt on Ushers at the time of the flotation will feel hard done by. At the time, investors were told that problems which held up a flotation three years before were history. And most thought a flotation price of 110p – a discount to rivals Mansfield and Fullers – would shield them from trouble. Not so. After a 2p rise yesterday they languish at 72p.

So what has gone wrong? Most of the problems came when a five-year contract with Courage came to a halt. Then Ushers found itself out of pocket after Miller Light, which the group brews under licence, failed to capture drinkers' imaginations.

Roger North, the pugnacious chief executive, now says these ructions really are in the past. He insists that underlying financial performance remains strong, pointing to like-for-like profits growth of 10 per cent from the pub estate.

Mr North and his chairman, Tom Vyner, think the shares are undervalued. They were in the market yesterday buying up 30,000 shares each and are seeking permission to buy back shares from their investors.

On 1998 profit estimates of £14.5m, the shares trade on a future multiple of around 6.5. Even for the depressed regional brewing sector, that's low. But having disappointed so soon after flotation, management needs to show it is back on the right path before anyone buys these shares.

Carlton chiefs take pay cuts after moderate profit growth

Michael Green, the chairman of Carlton Communications, the media group, was paid almost a quarter less last year than in 1996. Most of his fellow executive directors also took pay cuts after the company produced moderate profit growth and its share price fell. Peter Thal Larsen reports on a rare display of executive pay restraint.

Last year, Carlton's earnings per share before exceptional items grew by just 5 per cent as profits were hit by the strong pound and troubles at the company's video production division.

Mr Green was not the only Carlton director to take a pay cut. June de Moller, the managing director, saw her pay total fall from £380,278 to £289,091, while finance director Bernard Cragg, the finance director, was paid £252,302 – a drop of 25 per cent.

However, Nigel Walmsley, the director who runs Carlton's television arm, enjoyed a pay rise. The remuneration committee rewarded him for his "exceptional contribution" in helping British Digital Broadcasting (BDB), which is scheduled to start broadcasting in the autumn, to reach the top 25 per cent of FTSE 100 stocks over the period, directors receive the full award. If Carlton finishes in the bottom 35 per cent of its peer group, no bonus is paid.

In 1997, Carlton shares were among the worst performers in the FTSE, falling 9 per cent while the index rose by more than a fifth. Investors are worried that the group's heavy investment in setting up BDB, which is scheduled to start broadcasting in the autumn, will take years to pay off. Meanwhile, it faces competition from the satellite broadcaster BSkyB, which is launching its digital service before the end of June.



Michael Green: Cut in pay of £169,000 since 1996

Reed faces £200m penalty

Reed Elsevier, the Anglo-Dutch publishing group, yesterday announced that the cost of compensating advertisers who were overcharged for space in its hotel and airline directories is likely to reach £200m.

The scandal, originally revealed by Reed in a trading statement in September, relates to the exaggeration by Reed Travel Group of circulation figures for its directories between 1991 and 1997. Following an investigation involving an army of accountants, lawyers and circulation auditors Reed has put a compensation package to its advertisers.

Reed has yet to decide by how much it will write down the assets of Reed Travel Group, but the finance director, Mark Armour, said the adjustment, which does not affect cash flow, would be "substantial". On 31 December 1996, Reed Travel

Group had intangible assets of £472m. Analysts expect them to be written down by between £200m and £250m. Shares in Reed International, the UK-listed holding company for Reed Elsevier, firmed 13p to 653p.

Meanwhile, Reed also said it had decided to split up Reed Travel Group and distribute the various parts among its other businesses. The Hotel Directories and Travel Business Magazines arms would become part of Reed Business Information in the US.

—Peter Thal Larsen

Guinness Mahon goes up for sale

Guinness Mahon, one of the oldest UK banking groups, has been put up for sale by its Japanese owner. As Leo Paterson reports, the sale could mark a return to UK ownership for the bank.

The Bank of Yokohama (BoY), which took full control of the UK bank in 1991, has "decided to focus primarily on its domestic Japanese business", according to Guinness Mahon. The bank said yesterday it was in discussions with a number of institutions, understood to include both domestic and international players.

A further announcement will be made in due course.

David Potter, Guinness Mahon's chief executive, said he did not intend to break up the group. Guinness Mahon includes Henderson Crustwhale, the broker, and Guinness Flight Hambro Asset Management, a joint venture with Hambros, a rival banking group.

Mr Potter, who declined to provide details of potential bidders for the group, said: "We would like to see the business go to a financially strong owner who believes in the platform and the businesses we are in."

Analysts estimated Guinness Mahon's net asset value at £75m, excluding Guinness's 44 per cent interest in Guinness Flight Hambro Asset Management.

Guinness Mahon was established in Ireland in 1836, opened London offices in the late 1870s and quickly grew into

the one of the most respected City merchant banks. But the bank ran into difficulties in the late 1980s and the early 1990s and had to be bailed out by the BoY, which is reported to have injected more than £200m into the group to restore it to financial health. Guinness Mahon returned to operating profit in 1993.

Market speculation yesterday focused on the identities of the likely bidders.

"There are a number of people in the running, including some well-rehearsed candidates for BZW," said one source close to the talks. Mr Potter confirmed that interested parties included groups which had approached the bank in the past.

Donaldson Lufkin & Jenrette, the US investment bank, Paribas, the French bank, and Société Générale, the French bank which last month snapped up Hambros, were reportedly among the bidders for parts of BZW. BZW, the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank, was put up for sale last October, and eventually fell to Credit Suisse First Boston, the Swiss-American bank.

Mr Potter said the BoY's decision to sell was sparked by a strategic review last summer. He added the decision was taken prior to recent turmoil in the financial markets.

Guinness Mahon has a total of 572 employees in its asset management, private banking, broking and corporate finance divisions.

BoY is a leading Japanese retail bank and employs more than 6,000 staff.

Small businesses want incentives to invest

Small businesses want the Government to introduce incentives for investment and simplify the tax system in the spring Budget, a report showed today. Company owners should be encouraged to retain profits in their own firms, said the 112,000-member Federation of Small Businesses. Bureaucracy in VAT collection should be reduced and capital gains tax should be reformed to allow payment by instalments, the federation said in its Budget submission.

Card spending hits £10bn

Christmas shoppers splashed out more than £10bn on their plastic cards last month – the highest total ever. However, the rate of growth on credit and debit card spending slowed in December to 13 per cent, its lowest level more than a year, according to the Credit Card Research Group. Earlier in 1997, monthly card spending was growing at an annual rate of as much as 25 per cent.

The CCRG blamed the slowdown in growth on the impact of higher interest rates and on the large number of retailers who now accept credit and debit cards.

Sears cuts 340 jobs

Sears is to cut around 340 warehouse jobs as part of the rationalisation of the remaining parts of its British Shoe Corporation business. Most of the jobs will go at its Braintree warehouse in Essex, which is being taken over by Freemans, the group's mail order business. A further 30 will be lost at its warehouse in Washington, Tyne and Wear which is being closed along with another site in Bourne, near Peterborough.

Somerfield stays silent

Somerfield, the supermarket group whose shares have soared in the last month, remained tight-lipped yesterday on speculation that it might be involved in a merger. "We never comment on market rumour," said David Simons, chief executive. Mr Simons said he planned to remain at Somerfield for the balance of his career, scotching rumours that he might move on. He was speaking as Somerfield reported a 12 per cent growth in half-year underlying profits to £56.9m.

Investment column, this page

Allders sales ahead

Allders, the department store group reported buoyant trading over Christmas. Like-for-like sales in the 15 weeks to 10 January were 8.7 per cent ahead of the same period last year. However, the company warned that the economic environment was "clearly tightening".

Asian crisis hurts US banks

Three of America's largest banks, JP Morgan, Citicorp and Chase Manhattan, yesterday revealed that slowing economies and plunging financial markets in Asia hurt their fourth-quarter profits. JP Morgan suffered the largest blow from Asia, as earnings fell 35 per cent. Market slumps in the region caused losses in the bank's derivatives business, and about \$587m (£460m) of assets were "non-performing".

Chase said its fourth-quarter earnings declined by 5.7 per cent as the bank lost money in trading. Citicorp said fourth-quarter profit from operations rose 7.5 per cent, exceeding analysts' expectations.

£10 Conran lunch

The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout January and February for £10

From Monday January 5th until Saturday February 28th, the following establishments are offering readers a two course lunch or early evening supper for just £10 per person.

How to Book

To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting yourself as an independent diner. On your arrival at the restaurant you should present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

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0171 403 8403

Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm*

Mezzo 100 Wardour Street, London, W1V 3LE
0171 314 4000

Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

ake pay cuts
profit growth

Footsie fades after SmithKline news sends drug sector soaring

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

The stock market was high – for a time very high – on drugs after SmithKline Beecham confirmed it was in merger talks with American Home Products.

At one time SB was up 71.5p but in heavy two-way trading the shares ended lower, off 3p at 740p.

Old-fashioned profit taking and intriguing plays by arbitrageurs prompted the somersault. AHP, ran the argument, contains much more upside potential than SB. So when New York opened AHP shot ahead, possibly reducing the likely SB valuation in any merger.

What would be the biggest ever corporate merger sent the rest of the drugs pack soaring. But again shares ended well below the levels hit in the early frenetic stampede.

Globo Wellcome stretched 62p higher, then settled for a 30p gain to 1,669p at the close. Zeneca was another on

a dizzy roller-coaster. The shares surged almost 200p, ending 60p higher at 2,357p.

Others to move ahead included ML Laboratories, up 11.5p to 130.5p, and Cantab Pharmaceutical, 10p higher at 65p in response to UBS buy advice.

Nycomed Amersham headed the blue chip leader board, with a 162p gain to 2,397p. Salomon Smith Barney rates the stock suggesting a 2,700p target.

Zeneca, despite its failure to hold its best level, has re-emerged as a bid candidate in the wake of the SB/AHP talk. The leapfrogging approach to obtaining industry leadership which seems to dominate drug thinking, could make it a target for Roche, the Swiss group, or Glaxo.

With London seemingly very much in the forefront of corporate thinking, there has been a series of under-card

takeovers, many from overseas. The impression reigns that more deals are in the pipeline. Talk of mega-mergers – and they do not come much bigger than SB/AHP – is growing louder. The possible drugs alliance is clearly only one reason why many corporate advisers are slaving late into the evening.

There are even suggestions that BT, deprived of its expensive MCI adventure in the US, is feeling the winds of vulnerability. The shares, up 87.5p to 550p in busy trading, have climbed from 478.5p this month. There was even a deal at 573p. The buzz is that AT&T, the US giant often seen as dialling in on Vodafone, could be mulling over approaching BT which, after being a front runner, is now seen as limping behind in the race for world telecom supremacy.

Cable & Wireless, another possible victim of BT's ambi-

tions, added 7.5p to 508.5p after its Hong Kong Telecom offshoot accepted a £500m-plus cash settlement for an early end to its international telephone monopoly in the former colony.

Others still in the takeover spotlight included Safeway, up 5p at 372.5p, with rumoured rates Asda 4p higher at 193.5p.

Footsie, after an early 25 point drugs-inspired boost,

ended just 4.6 higher at 5,278.2. Turnover topped £1 billion, with ABN Amro Hoare Govett trading in Elements, the chemical group, swelling volume. The securities house placed the 7.63 per cent shareholding held by Sime Darby, the Malaysian group, at 125p. Hoare Govett said the shares were placed to a "wide group of institutional investors". Elements ended 3p to 128.5p.

The flight to defensive domestic shares continued. Morgan Stanley supported National Power, up 10p at 670p, and UBS lifted British Energy 7.5p to 463p. Credit Lyonnais Laing and Daiwa kept PowerGen on the boil, up 24p to 873p.

In a generally unsettled financial sector Prudential Corporation fell 26p to 770p, reflecting a fourth-quarter slowdown by its US subsidiary, Jackson National GRE firmed 3.25p to 371.25p on NatWest

Securities support. Suggestions that Woolwich could descend on a French bank clipped the shares 4p to 336p.

British Steel firmed 1p to 128p ahead of an analysts' meeting. Rank the leisure group, labelled a "weak hold" by UBS fell 7.5p to 326.75p.

The strong pound continued to hit exporters with Smiths Industrial 25p to 730p.

Jarvis, the construction and rail maintenance group, jumped 25p to 408p. It won a £26m repairs contract with Royal & Sun Alliance and formed a joint venture with Railtrack dedicated to improving railway performance. Lourho, on hopes that a South African coal mining deal is at last near, added 3.25p to 85.25p.

Argos, off 26p to 400p, was hit by deals below the then market price but Tate & Lyle, up 18.5p to 551.5p, continued to advance on profit upgradings.

TAKING STOCK

Emerald Energy's Colombian cliff-hanger continues.

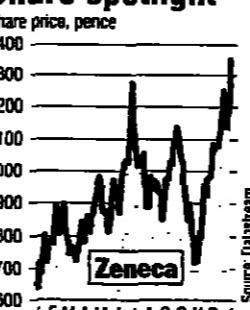
Because of mud its long drill at its Chawina site will drag on for up to another 15 days. The company says oil and gas shows have been encountered but mud has forced it to side track some of its bore hole.

The shares eased 0.25p to 7.75p with turnover put at 11.5 million. Emerald says it is "very encouraged" with its progress.

A boardroom row has erupted at Radius, the computer systems and maintenance group. Ernest Sharpe, once a joint managing director at Grand Metropolitan, had called a shareholders meeting to oust chairman Michael Roberts and chief executive Philip Kelly. Mr Sharp, with a 10 per cent stake, intends to resign if he is defeated.

Radius shares held at 32p. They have been 65p in the past year.

Share spotlight



Source: Bloomberg

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (PE) ratio is the shareprice divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional. Other dealer ER rights: x-Excluded; s-Suspended; p-Partly Paid; N/Paid = Not Paid. Gilt Prices are Bloomberg's Generic.

Source: Bloomberg

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (PE) ratio is the shareprice divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional.

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Gilt Prices are Bloomberg's Generic.

Source: Bloomberg

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(TIS Inc, London EC2A 4PZ)

Sesq volume: 1.09bn trades 80,007

Giltz Index 102.96 - 0.27

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol	Stock	Vol
Elements	54,676	Under	1,976	Telecom	10,756	Brit Petroleum	9,296
Group	32,700	Telecom	1,976	Agip	8,876	BP	8,876
Stal Tramp	24,076	Laporte	1,256	Land Sec	8,616	Glaxo Wellcome	9,566
Seabank Beach	22,536	Rol-Royce	1,046	Siemens	8,236	Prudential Corp	9,036
3G Comms	20,366	UK	1,046	Honeywell	7,930	Orbit	7,930
Orbit	19,200	Telecom	1,046	Motorola	7,856	Telco	7,856
Telecom	18,700	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,600	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,500	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,400	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,300	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,200	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,100	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	18,000	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	17,900	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
Telecom	17,800	Siemens	1,046	Siemens	7,856	Telecom	7,856
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Telecom	14,						

24/UNIT TRUSTS

Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	Fund	Sell	Buy	Ytd	
ABN AMRO Petroleum Ltd	86.03	82.03	-12	Equity Inc	267.2	262.46	4.2	Equity Fund	75.66	75.29	0.0	Growth Portfolio Inc	22.85	21.60	1.78	Scottish Widows Fund Managers	10.75	10.50	0.0	Scot. Widows Fund Managers	10.75	10.50	0.0	D-Mark
Equity Income	149.95	145.95	-3.95	Far East Growth	52.08	52.03	0.0	Global Fund	5.18	5.02	4.17	Int'l Growth Acc	7.09	6.90	4.70	Global Inc.	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	Spot
Global Income	102.05	98.05	-4.00	Global Fund Acc	56.02	55.72	5.05	Global Dynamics	49.25	49.13	0.00	Japan Fund Acc	20.48	21.34	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	1/3 month
World Fund	92.35	90.35	-2.00	High Yield	52.32	52.07	5.48	Hedge Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	Japan Govt Acc	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	3 months
AIM Trust Fund	14.00	13.00	-1.00	Hornbeam Fund	10.23	10.00	1.95	Hornbeam Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	International Fund	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	1/3 month
4 Bridge Bridge Lane, London SE1 2HJ	20.00	19.75	-0.25	Horizon Fund	11.65	11.50	0.01	Horizon Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	Investment Fund	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	3 months
Americas Strategy	10.75	10.50	-0.25	Horizon Fund	11.65	11.50	0.01	Horizon Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	Income Fund	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	1/3 month
Asia Pacific	61.75	60.50	-1.25	Horizon Fund	11.65	11.50	0.01	Horizon Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	International Fund	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	3 months
Asian Pacific	10.75	10.50	-0.25	Horizon Fund	11.65	11.50	0.01	Horizon Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	Investment Fund	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	1/3 month
Asian Pacific Fund	8.50	8.25	-0.25	Horizon Fund	11.65	11.50	0.01	Horizon Fund	6.53	6.45	0.00	Income Fund	20.25	20.00	0.00	Greenwich Acc	10.75	10.50	0.0	SGI Corp	11.20	10.80	0.0	3 months
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Nautical Warning heralds the arrival of Noseda

A trainer with a big future on the Flat is a winner at the first time of asking while the fields take shape for vital Festival trials this weekend. Greg Wood reports.

Fortunately for Jeremy Noseda, the Jockey Club's new rules on suspected non-triers do not come into operation until March, otherwise yesterday could have been an afternoon in more ways than one.

Twenty-four hours after the Club proposed to hold an inquiry at Portman Square whenever a horse without a previous first finish to its name wins a handicap, Noseda's colt Nautical Warning did just that, improving significantly on last

year's form to win the opening race at Lingfield. Had Noseda been asked to explain the improvement, though, he would have had a reasonable and fair excuse, since Nautical Warning was the first runner of his official training career.

Noseda was a vital figure behind the scenes of the Godolphin operation when horses like Lammtarra were winning most of the Group Ones worth having in 1995, and on yesterday's early evidence, he is as comfortable on the sand at Lingfield as he is on the green expanses of Longchamp.

Nautical Warning had to survive a steward's inquiry, which examined possible interference in a frantic three-horse struggle to the line after which Noseda's runner prevailed by just a neck. "That is a relief," the trainer said afterwards. "Now the game can only

get harder, but I am thrilled to do it with my first runner. I am also glad for the owner, Benny Schmidt-Bodner, because he has been a great supporter of mine. The horse was fit enough, and could be back here again soon."

Noseda's will surely be a name to watch for when the Flat season proper begins in the spring, but in the meantime there is a great deal of life left in the jumps campaign. The cast of characters for the Champion Hurdle in particular should start to crystallise this weekend, when almost all the leading ante-post contenders and plenty of live outsiders too, will be put to the test.

Istabraq, the clear favourite for the championship, will contest the Irish equivalent at Leopardstown on Sunday, a day after Redkeel, Data Star and Collier Bay are expected to

line up for the Champion Hurdle Trial at Haydock.

Mary Revelley's Mare, meanwhile, will take the latest step on her frustratingly gradual path towards the top in the Morebattle Hurdle at Kelso on Friday.

The main players at Haydock, to judge by the betting at least, will be Collier Bay and Redkeel, but it could prove foolhardy to dismiss Data Star too lightly. Malcolm Jefferson's runner was the champion National Hunt Flat horse of 1995, winning the Festival Bumper at Cheltenham, but the two seasons since injuries sustained in this very race at Haydock have prevented a return to the Festival for a run in the timber championship.

Jefferson, thankfully, is not superstitious, and nor does he believe that the 40-1 currently offered against Data Star for the Champion Hurdle is a reasonable

assessment of his chance.

This, remember, is a horse who has proved his quality both on the flat and over jumps and who hurdles with exceptional fluency.

As Jefferson points out,

"he's never done anything wrong in his life".

The problem, his trainer feels, is that "people like to build



Noseda briefs Nautical Warning's rider, Carl Lowther. Photograph: Julian Herbert/Allsport

first and last chance to assess Data Star before the Festival itself. "He doesn't take a lot of getting fit and he'll go straight there after Haydock," Jefferson says. "We hope the ground will be soft, just the right side of raceable, and I don't think he'll be a 40-1 chance for the Champion afterwards."

Saturday's race will be the

first and last chance to assess Data Star before the Festival itself.

"He doesn't take a lot of getting fit and he'll go straight

there after Haydock," Jefferson says. "We hope the ground will be soft, just the right side of raceable, and I don't think he'll be a 40-1 chance for the Champion afterwards."

England A kept their composure in the intense Colombo heat yesterday to emerge in a strong position after the frustrating second day of their match against Sri Lanka Colts XI.

After adding just 11 runs to their overnight 373 for 9, England laboured on their first full day in the field to earn a posi-

tion of strength with 208 for 8, still 27

runs adrift of a avoiding the fol-

low-on going into the final day.

The pace bowlers, James

Ormond, Ben Hollioake and

Dougie Brown, gave the A side

a flying start by claiming a

wicket apiece in the opening 15

overs to reduce them to 21 for 3.

Their resolve, however, was

tested as Sajid Fernando and

Manoj Mendis added 120 in the next 44 overs.

Brown failed with at least six

good lbw appeals, while perhaps

the most unlucky was the um-

pire's refusal to accept David

Nash's quick work in stumping

Fernando before he had

reached his half-century when

he was clearly out of his ground

after going forward to the left-

arm spinner Dean Cosker.

Fernando and Mendis fell

within four overs of each other

after tea as England claimed

five wickets in the final session

- a reward for their patient ap-

proach.

Second day of three: Colts XI won loss

FORUM: 1-1, Tossing: 16-1, General

Overshoot: 373 for 9

J Ormond & Ben Hollioake vs Sunesh Perera ... 49

D A Nash not out ... 2

Manoj Mendis vs Sajid Fernando ... 12

Total (61.3 overs) ... 364

Bowling: Sunesh Perera 173-7-232, Gallop

20-1-31; J Ormond 10-1-102, Region 27-6-51

SRI LANKA COLTS XI - First Innings

B Edwina b Ormond ... 0

S Kalathgoda c Knight b Hollioake ... 4

Sampath Perera c & b Ben Hollioake ... 4

G Dhananjaya c & b Hollioake ... 63

M Mendis c Nash b Cosker ... 67

A Polomawitharana not out ... 22

JT M Dahanayake b Gallop ... 1

Sunesh Perera c Ormond b Cosker ... 1

M Rajan not out ... 10

Extras (61.3-62.3) ... 4

Fall: 1-0-2-3-3-2-1-4-1-5-92-8-163-7-178

To bat: 1 Gallop

Umpires: J Ormond 15-5-32-2; Hollioake 22-2-31-1; Ben Hollioake 6-1-23; Gallop 10-4-6-2; Ethan 6-1-29-2; Coster 9-5-37-2

Umpires: S Amarasinghe and J W Botuwa

Yorkshire may yet stay at Headingley

Yorkshire yesterday agreed to give Headingley a chance to serve the county as a Test and first-class venue for the 21st century.

The county club have been

planning to move from Leeds

to a new site in Durkar, near

Wakefield, which they believed

would ensure a healthy future

for international and Champi-

onship cricket in Yorkshire. All

along they have been locked in

an argument with Headingley's

owners - the Leeds Cricket,

Football and Athletic Co Ltd -

who want to redevelop the ex-

isting ground and have refused

to waive Yorkshire's lease on the

venue, which still has more

than 80 years to run.

In a joint statement from

Yorkshire and Leeds CF&A,

both parties have now com-

mitted themselves to attempting

to secure planning permission

and grant funding for the redevelopment of

Headingley, before plans for any alternative venue go any further.

"The parties are agreed that

it is in their respective best in-

terests to try and find a solution

to the long-running dispute be-

tween them. They will explore

the possibility of achieving a

practical and financially viable

redevelopment scheme," the

statement said.

- David Clough

TODAY'S NUMBER

66

The number of penalties

needed to settle a boys'

match between Mich-

leover and Chellaston.

Both sides missed the

first 60 spot-kicks. Mich-

leover eventually won after

the referee moved the penalty spot closer to the

goal after the deadlock threatened to last longer than the match.

Nicholls says that Business is booming

The King George VI Chase winner, See More Business, delighted Paul Nicholls in work yesterday and is on course for the Pillar Chase at Cheltenham on Saturday week. Opponents are likely to include Addison Boy, Barton Bank and Rough Quest in what connections view as a dress rehearsal for the Gold Cup.

"We've had no problems since the King George," Nicholls said. "He's going to have only one run before the Gold Cup as his confidence is high now."

Andrew Thornton rode See More Business on Boxing Day, but the gelding is to be reuni-

RICHARD EDMONDSON

NAP: Alpine Joker

(Windsor 3.10)

NB: Scarrots

(Windsor 1.40)

ed with Timmy Murphy, who was denied the ride at Kempton because of a whip ban. "Timmy did all the hard work with the horse, getting his jumping sorted out, it's only right that he rides," Nicholls said. "You never know, 'See More' might repay him by winning a big prize."

Alabang, third in the William Hill Handicap Hurdle at Sandown, has been installed favourite with the sponsors for the Tote Lanzarote Hurdle at Kempton on Saturday.

RESULTS

LINGFIELD

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Tales of Rodger the Mariner whose ship has already come in

Stanley Matthews was 38 before he laid hands on one. Tom Finney and George Best finished without one. Alan Shearer has not even come close to one. Yet there was Graham Rodger, a month out of his teens, climbing the steps to the Royal Box to claim his FA Cup winner's medal.

Looking back to 1987, it all seems like a crazy dream. Coventry City, who had never won any serious silverware, overcame Tottenham Hotspur 3-2 in a classic final. And one ardent supporter lived out the ultimate Sky Blue fantasy, right down to helping to make the winning goal.

That fan was Rodger. Now, as one of the elder statesmen of Grimsby Town's team, he is on the Wembley trail again. In Saturday's fourth round, the Second Division play-off contenders visit Leeds United. The tie stirs fond memories for the 30-year-old central defender, for it was the Yorkshire club that Coventry beat, also by 3-2, in an equally epic semi-final.

Rodger did not figure against Billy Bremner's underdogs. Amazingly, his appearance as substitute against Spurs was his first during Coventry's run. Having been hauled off in their exit at Watford the previous year, after a chasing from Nigel Callaghan, he had still to play a full FA Cup tie when he emulated Matthews.

Add the fact that Rodger had started a mere 15 League matches and it is no wonder he feels "extremely lucky". All the more so given that he owed his break to the misfortune of a friend, Brian Borrows, having damaged a cartilage a week before the final.

Though he knew there would have to be a reshuffle, Rodger did not expect to be involved. "There was Steve Sedgley, Paul Culpin and me," he recalled, "and I honestly believed the other two would be the subs."

The first inkling came as the Coventry squad watched the build-up before leaving their hotel for the stadium. "They were going through our line-up and my picture came up as a sub. The manager [John Sillett] hadn't said anything so I assumed it was just the TV people taking a guess."

It was therefore a relaxed Rodger who joined in the ritual pre-match stroll around the pitch. Then he reached the dressing-room. "I saw my boots laid out and the No 14 shirt waiting for me. I remember

thinking, 'Bloody hell, I'm playing here'. But still no one had told me."

"Finally, just before the team talk, Mr Sillett said: 'Oh, by the way, you're on the bench'. It was a masterstroke – typical of his man-management – because I had no time to worry about the game."

Coventry, facing the likes of Hoddle, Waddle, Gough and Ardiles, quickly fell behind. But they were level at 2-2 when, late in normal time, Brian Kilcline was hurt in a characteristically uncompromising challenge. Rodger took over, and in extra time intercepted a pass by the current England coach to Clive Allen.

"I strode into midfield and saw this wonder ball out to Nick Pickering on the far wing. I didn't go for it because I thought: 'God, if I mess it up I could let them clean in'. I took another touch and flared it."

Early this season, he was not in Buckley's plans and told him reserve football was no use at his age. "He understood and said I could have a free transfer in recognition of my service, which was great. Then Mark Lever broke a toe, I came back in and things have gone well for myself and the team."

In tandem with a Hanseatic young Scot, Peter Handyside, he has helped Grimsby knock two top-flight clubs out of the Coca-Cola Cup – Sheffield Wednesday and the holders, Leicester – as well as nailing Norwich 3-0 to earn a day out at Elland Road.

"The gulf between our level and the Premiership is vast, but we've shown that you've got a chance if you play above yourselves and they underperform. I'm not saying we'll win, but we're playing some excellent stuff. The pressure's all on Leeds."

Rodger, of course, has firsthand experience of Cup psychology. Reflecting on his finest half-hour, he pictures the Coventry apprentices (including Steve Livingstone, who now leads Grimsby's attack), "going mental" as Kilcline raised the trophy; and he hears the crowd crowing "Are you watching, Jimmy Greaves?" to the media pundit and ex-Spurs striker who tipped their demise at every stage.

"I was there, I was part of it and no one can ever take that away from me," Rodger beamed, while admitting he could probably walk through the centre of Coventry unrecognised. If Leeds are humbled, he will have no chance of doing likewise in Grimsby.

Barnwell acts as the peacemaker

The League Managers' Association chief executive, John Barnwell, is calling for referees and managers "to build bigger bridges between each other" after the controversy of the weekend.

Barnwell wants managers and referees to hold more meetings to try to develop a greater understanding of the demands of each other's profession.

Among the topics he wants debated is a possible cooling-off period for managers at the end of the game before they confront match officials or the media. His comments follow an outburst by the press by the Coventry manager, Gordon Strachan, within five minutes of the end of Saturday's 2-2 draw with Arsenal, in which he claimed referees were giving his side "nothing".

Barnwell said: "What we don't want to do is inflame this situation and people are trying to whip up an us and them situation between managers and referees which is not the case.

"If you aren't careful you can end up with a very entrenched position of 'them and us' and it's not that. What the aim of everyone should be is for the improvement of the game."

Another manager wanting more clarification from officials is Leeds' George Graham who yesterday called on the Football Association and the Referees' Association to issue uniform guidelines on the use of video evidence.

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McManaman faces probe over agent

Steve McManaman and Barcelona are facing an investigation by world football's governing body, Fifa, for using the former Spice Girls manager, Simon Fuller, to set up a £12m transfer.

Fuller works for the England midfielder and Barcelona have confirmed he has met them to review McManaman's move for the end of the season.

However, Fifa will investigate Fuller's role in the talks as he does not hold an agent's licence and therefore cannot be involved in transfers. If Fuller is found to have broken the rules, both McManaman and Barcelona will face heavy penalties.

McManaman yesterday dismissed the reports from Spain. He said: "How can I be expected to keep commenting on something that has no truth whatsoever."

A spokesman for McMan-

aman's club, Liverpool, who agreed a £12.3m fee from Barcelona in summer only for McManaman's personal contractual talks to break down, said: "There has been no contact with Barcelona since last August."

Middlesbrough's manager, Bryan Robson, still hopes to sign Dion Dublin from Coventry, despite the striker rejecting a £4m move to the First Division club on Monday. Robson said: "I think the deal is still alive."

The Boro defender Gianluca Festa is awaiting the result of his appeal against his dismissal during the 1-1 draw with Ipswich on Saturday. Robson has accused the Ipswich striker David Johnson of diving when challenged by Festa.

Bradford City's chairman, Geoffrey Richmond, yesterday named 51 clubs who support his

proposal to have David Mellor removed as head of the Government's Football Task Force after the former Conservative MP queried on his BBC Radio 5 Live show whether colour had been a factor in the sacking of Chris Kamara as Bradford's manager.

Richmond wrote to the other 91 Premiership and Nationwide League clubs and the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, appealing for support in his attempt to have Mellor ousted from his role on a body which has the stated aim of eliminating racism from football.

The 51 apparently supporting the campaign include six Premiership clubs: Barnsley, Crystal Palace, Everton, Leicester, Newcastle, and Southampton. Two clubs, Wimbledon and Chester, support Mellor, while Leeds intend to raise the mat-

ter at tomorrow's FA Premier League meeting.

George Weah, who was linked last year with a move to Arsenal, could leave Milan at the end of the season, after an argument with the coach, Fabio Capello, over a back injury the Liberian striker suffered in the club's gym last month.

Doncaster players have refused to co-operate with an offer by Uri Geller to help Rovers climb off the bottom of the Third Division by using "positive thinking", starting by ensuring they beat Macclesfield on Saturday.

Rovers had arranged a coach to Geller's home in Reading, but the manager, Mark Weaver, said: "They have been in touch with the PFA and are refusing to go. They say they have been made fools of enough this season."

– Alan Nixon

Palmer sympathises with United's show of frustration

Southampton's Carlton Palmer yesterday defended Manchester United's lack of discipline during their 1-0 defeat at the Dell on Monday, insisting that he would be disappointed if they were not like that.

A trio of United players, David Beckham, Ryan Giggs and Nicky Butt, were booked for arguing with the referee Mike Riley as frustration mounted with their failure to break down a stubborn and well organised home defence.

Kevin Davies' third-minute header proved enough for the

three points as Andy Cole's effort was ruled out for offside and Beckham's free-kick came back off the upright.

The game followed a weekend of similar indiscipline from managers and players alike but Palmer, no stranger to the referee's notebook himself, had sympathy for the players. "I think it's frustration," he said. "They want to win like every team wants to win and when it's not going your way you do get frustrated."

"They're professional players, they want to win the champi-

onship. It's to be expected. I'd be disappointed if I was on their side and I wasn't amongst players that weren't happy with things that were going on like that. They have to care. If decisions go against you, you do lose your temper. You can't just switch it on and switch it off. You have to have that passion."

"Of all the teams I've seen, consistently they do it week in week out. If you sit off them and let them play they'll destroy you. Before the game starts if you are playing teams like Manchester United, Chelsea or Liverpool you know you have to close them down and deny them space. If you don't do that you haven't got a chance against them, to be fair."

Southampton's victory extended their unbeaten run to six games in the Premiership and kept United well within sight of the chasing pack. Alex Ferguson's team have a five-point lead, but Palmer insisted United

had remained firm favourites. "I still think they're the best side in Europe," Palmer said. "We've worked extremely hard against them."

"Hunter will now be hoping to repeat the 5-1 victory over Bond which launched his record-breaking run in the 1996 Regal Welsh when, at only 17 years and four months old, he became the youngest player ever to figure in the semi-finals of a world-ranking tournament.

Even in defeat Davis, who in a fortnight begins the defence of his Benson and Hedges Masters title, gained encouragement from an improvement on some dismal displays of late.

"I have been very disheartened with my form in practice and in matches all season, but that was a lot better," he said.

"Watching a slow-motion replay



Graham Rodger, above, in the comfortable surroundings of Grimsby's Blundell Park and below (front row, second from right), in the heady arena of Wembley after Coventry had won the 1987 FA Cup beating Tottenham 3-2. Photographs: David Ashdown and Allsport

RUGBY UNION

Brive coach slams English clubs' stance on Europe

England's militant senior clubs insist they have the full support of their French counterparts in their dispute with the organisers of the Heineken Cup – a committee room conflict that threatens the tournament's very existence. But, as Chris Hewett reports, the first cracks in the united front have started to appear.

Never trust a strong, silent type, especially one with a vested interest to protect. Laurent Seigne, the former French Test prop whose coaching methods at Brive notoriously combine the brutal with the Trappist, yesterday broke ranks with the grand Anglo-French alliance that has set a time bomb ticking away beneath the outstanding club competition in world rugby.

Seigne does not speak often – neither in public nor, according to tales emanating from the European champions' dressing-room, in private – but when he does venture an opinion, it tends to cause ructions. His description of Pontypool players as "semi-civilised animals" after the brawl in Le Bar Toulzac last September ruffled plenty of feathers and he did his level best to raise a few hackles yesterday.

"The Heineken Cup is the ultimate," he pronounced as the rugby grapevine continued to suggest that the English clubs' decision to boycott the tournament had left it dead in the water. "We were very much into the competition from its launch because the games were like internationals and we have continued to see matches of a different level and quality. As a club, we have made progress with each fixture."

SNOOKER

Hunter overcomes lack of inexperience to see off Davis

Paul Hunter bridged a huge gulf in experience to defeat the six-times world champion, Steve Davis, in the Regal Welsh Open at Newport yesterday.

The promising 19-year-old from Leeds scored a 5-3 victory to reach the last 16 of the event and earn a meeting with the eighth seed, Nigel Bond. In the process, Hunter also impressed Davis, a player well-qualified to assess the relative merits of the game's up-and-coming young talents.

"I think the jury is out on any player until they win a tournament or two, but Paul certainly deserves his label as a strong prospect," said Davis. "He looks confident and he knows what he's doing around the table."

Hunter, quoted as an odds-on favourite by the bookmakers, fell 2-1 behind before racing through the following three frames in only 38 minutes thanks to breaks of 87, 72 and 56. Davis doggedly salvaged the next only for Hunter to apply the finishing touches to an accomplished performance by potting the blue to a distant baulet pocket in frame eight.

The Scot secured a last 16 meeting with Stephen Lee when he progressed with a 5-3 victory over Joe Perry. Against Hendry, Burnett was forced to rally from 4-2 down to win 5-4 but it was a different story against Perry. He always had the upper hand after moving 3-1 ahead with runs of 36, 44, 35 and 71 in the early stages.

"With so many of the top players going out I feel capable of doing something," said Burnett. "Obviously, when you've beaten someone like Stephen, it gives you a tremendous amount of confidence and I'm really determined to capitalise on it."

Burnett's fellow countryman Graeme Dott was also in the groove as he set a personal best and put himself in line for a £5,000 bonus, for the highest televised break, during a 5-2 victory over Steve James. The 20-year-old from Larkhall, near Glasgow, who had already ousted the 12th seed, James Wattana, in the previous round, had a 142 clearance.

27/SPORT

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MOTOR RACING

Prost cannot resist a swipe at the driver who got away

Alain Prost is as ambitious in team ownership as he was as a driver. Yesterday he questioned Damon Hill's ambition at the launch of his team's new car, one the British former world champion chose not to drive. **Derick Allop reports from Barcelona.**

Alain Prost launched his new car, the Peugeot-powered AP01, here yesterday, intent

on proving Damon Hill was wrong to reject the chance of driving it.

A day after Hill expressed his unease at leading the Jordan challenge without the status of No 1, Prost was buoyant at the prospect of placing his car in the care of his fellow Frenchman, Olivier Panis, and Jarno Trulli. The inexperienced Italian was given his chance when Hill decided against joining Prost at the last minute and opted instead for Jordan, whose new car he will test the Jordan for the first time here this morning.

That sudden change of direction by the former world champion patently still irks the man who won the title four times. But Prost's

ill-starred negotiations with the driver he partnered at Williams five years ago have left him concluding: "I'm not sure Damon has the motivation to be world champion again. Now I have no reason to do not sign for us."

"I think what I have always thought, that Damon made the wrong decision. He was very close to signing for us. The papers were ready to sign. He told us with two hours to go that he would not be joining us."

"I don't think it was anything to do with money. What I promised him and the way I intend to run the team was no built. I'm straight with drivers. It's easy to make promises and not deliver. But we aim to be

a top team. That means breaking into the leading four. I don't know how soon we can do that but if it is not this year I hope it will be next year."

"I am very happy with the drivers we have. Olivier is experienced now and fully recovered from his accident last year. Jarno is young but now he knows he can learn and concentrate on his driving because the car is his."

Prost has endeavoured to foster a sense of togetherness in his team, training with his drivers in a carefully choreographed bonding programme. He is also forming an open working relationship with Peugeot

which, he believes, will benefit both concerns. He said: "It is important for us all to work together. I want the drivers to be fit but also we want the morale to be good. It is the same with Peugeot. We have an open relationship with them, which is not usual in Formula One. But it is like being in the same team, sharing information and facilities. This is the way to go in the future."

Prost has taken a step towards that future by building a new factory and increasing his work-force to 150. To prosper, he knows he must beat the likes of Jordan and graduate to the "Premier League".

He said: "It is difficult to compete and

survive in Formula One. We all have our objectives and I know I have to deliver."

Trulli has charmed the French camp by learning the language to a passable standard inside three months, and seemingly forming a sound relationship with his team-mate.

Panis, who suffered double fractures to both legs during last season's Canadian Grand Prix, said: "I would have been happy to work with Damon Hill and I'm a bit disappointed with his decision because it would have been a big challenge for him. Jarno is young, quick, and we are working hard together to develop the car."

RALLYING

Turn for the worse takes out Makinen

Tommi Makinen's forecast that the Monte Carlo Rally is usually a tale of the unexpected took an unwelcome twist for the Finn yesterday. Makinen crashed out while leading the first event of the season, denting not only his Mitsubishi Lancer but also his chances of winning a hat-trick of world titles.

Carlos Sainz, twice a winner, took immediate advantage of Makinen's spin on the day's first special stage, taking over first place in his Toyota Corolla.

Makinen led his Spanish rival by more than a minute after Monday's first six stages but said: "I always said anything could happen in this rally."

He is to undergo tests in a Helsinki hospital today as Makinen appears to be "still suffering from the after-effects of pneumonia," according to a Mitsubishi spokesman.

The Monte Carlo is proving something of a mountain for Makinen, who has never won the rally. He was leading last year when the wrong choice of tyres on the final overnight stage cost him victory.

His countryman Juha Kankkunen, four-times a world champion, moved up to second place in a Ford Escort after the first two of yesterday's stages.

The Subaru drivers Piero Liatti, of Italy, and Britain's Colin McRae recovered from minor setbacks to exert pressure on Sainz. Liatti, last year's winner, had rolled his car over in the day's second special stage when McRae punctured but they both fought back in the next stage to reduce Sainz's lead. Richard Burns, driving in his first Monte Carlo, was an impressive third, 1min 28sec off the pace, in his Mitsubishi, ahead of Liatti and McRae.



Great Britain's Lee Westwood practises in Phuket yesterday for the Johnnie Walker Classic. Photograph: Allsport

GOLF

Faldo searches for the drive of old to challenge Woods

Nick Faldo hopes a new driver will bring a new lease of life to a career that recently has failed to live up to the high standards of the Briton.

But Faldo will have his work cut out in Phuket this week in the opening event of the European Tour, the Johnnie Walker Classic. The 40-year-old will have to face the two hottest young properties in golf, Tiger Woods and Lee Westwood.

Last season Faldo had his worst-ever sequence in the

majors and fell from fifth in the world rankings to 17th. Meanwhile, Woods, 21, won the Masters by 12 shots then became world No 1 in record time. Westwood, 24, showed his potential by ending the season winning the Volvo Masters in Spain, Japan's Taiheiyo Masters and the Australian Open.

Faldo will relish a show-down with Woods, sure to attract a huge crowd in the homeland of his mother, when the £133,330 first prize is on the line on Sunday. "I needed to

hit it further to keep up with these young whippersnappers and I've got an extra 10 yards with my new driver. Fifteen if I get it," Faldo said.

Fred Couples will not line-up after missing his flight to Bangkok because of having to contest a play-off for the Bob Hope Classic in California on Sunday. It was worth it, as he beat Bruce Lietzke. "It's a pity with Fred having just won, but I still think we have a pretty good field," said the tournament director, Peter German.

In Woods, Faldo, Westwood, Ernie Els and Jose Maria Olazabal that is no empty boast. The quintet were all involved in a colourful opening ceremony yesterday when five Indian elephants were led down the 10th fairway. But the photo opportunity did not quite go as originally intended. It was hoped that Woods would sit astride one of them - but his insurance company would not allow it.

- Mark Garrod, Phuket

Kenyans take up the running on the snow trails

Following in the tradition of Jamaica's bobsleigh team and Eddie the Eagle, the Winter Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan, will feature the latest unlikely candidates for glory.

Kenya, the nation which consistently produces middle and long-distance running champions, does not even have a national skiing federation. However, it does have its first cross-country skiing team, featuring Philip Boit, whose uncle Mike won bronze over 800 metres at the 1972 Munich Olympics. "I am very proud, very happy," Boit said from his training base in Nairobi, Finland.

The concept behind Boit's Olympic odyssey is simple. In a country with an abundance of

running talent, even an average performer could have the edge in other endurance sports. Stick a pair of skis on the runner and Africa could have its first Winter Games gold medallist.

In practice, it has been a little more complicated for Boit and his training partner, Henry Bitok, since they moved north nearly two years ago. For a start, when they stepped off the plane from Nairobi, it was the first time they had seen snow.

After two years and \$200,000 (£125,000) of investment by the American shoe company which sponsors the Kenyan track team, some progress has been made. The pair possess the endurance and stamina. Boit, aged 26, has a 1500m best of 3min 40sec.

SPORTING DIGEST

Basketball

New York Knicks 82; Philadelphia 93; Sacramento 85; Boston 82; Charlotte 84; LA Lakers 92; Orlando 88; Charlotte 93; Toronto 88; New Jersey 85; San Antonio 84; Seattle 74; Houston 82; Utah 88; Detroit 85.

Bowls

WORLD INDOOR CHAMPIONSHIPS (Prato): Palma first round: S Rice and P Price; A. Lopez and J. Lopez; D. Lopez and G. Lopez (Spain); 7-5, 7-3; D. Gourlay and H. Duff (Eng) v A. Ross and A. Marshall (Sco); 7-2, 7-4; 2-7, 1-7; S. Lewis and J. Lewis (Eng) v J. Lewis and K. Welch (Greece); 7-3, 7-5, 7-3.

CRICKET

SECOND TEST (Colombo): Zimbabwe 244 for 6 wickets (R Power 67, S Mirell 54, D. Gifford 54, H. Duff 50) v India 245 for 6 wickets (S Jasavant 55, M Jayawardene 55, T. Siriwardena 55, S. Jayasuriya 55) (2nd day). Test to start on Friday.

The Tour de France, which starts in Dublin this year, will begin in the Vendée region of western France next year, with the prologue at Puy du Fou on 3 July and the first stage from Montélimar to Châlons.

Cycling

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Football

POINT LEAGUE First Division: Peterborough United 2; Gillingham 1; Bury 1; Chesterfield 1; Walsall 1; Bradford City 1; Leyton Orient 1; Mansfield 1; Oldham 1; Notts County 1; Plymouth Argyle 1; Port Vale 1; Shrewsbury Town 1; Stevenage 1; Swindon Town 1; Wigan Athletic 1; Wrexham 1; York City 1.

TENNIS

YOUNG FUTURES CUP Third round: THE TIMES FA YOUTH CUP: 1st round: Postponed; Everton v Stoke (play-off tomorrow).

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France details World Cup security strategy

France will deploy about 6,000 police and several hundred soldiers to maintain security and prevent terrorist attacks during this year's World Cup, the French interior minister announced yesterday.

"We are managing a crowd phenomenon. These are phenomena which are difficult to control, and excesses are possible," Jean-Pierre Chevenement said. "As a result, we will take the necessary measures."

More than two million people, including hundreds of thousands of fans from across Europe, are expected to attend

the 64 games at this year's World Cup in June and July at 10 different stadiums across France.

French authorities are being especially vigilant about potential disturbances and police forces across the Continent are already exchanging photographs of potential troublemakers in order to minimise the possibility of fighting between rival groups of fans.

Between 5,000 and 6,000 police will be on hand to ensure security during the 33 days of competition and at least 300 soldiers will help ensure safety as part of anti-terrorist measures